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International Advisory Councils and Internationalization of Governance.

A Qualitative Analysis

Georgiana Mihut, Philip G. Altbach and Jamil Salmi

Abstract

This paper discusses the emergence of International Advisory Councils (IACs) at universities around the world and introduces the concept of internationalization of governance. Global trends in the field of higher education, such as the quest to create world-class universities and advance in global rankings, the rise of new public management, and internationalization have primed universities to create adjacent governing structures in the form of IACs. IACs are positioned to offer advice on the strategic direction of the institution and its main challenges. In order to better understand this new phenomenon, we interviewed 20 members of IACs and 6 representatives of universities hosting such structures. This paper presents the thematic analysis conducted on these interviews and proposes a typology of IACs. Three types of IACs are identified: transformative, prestige-oriented and symbolic.

Key words: international advisory council, internationalization of governance, global trends, qualitative analysis

Introduction

In recent years the upper level of governance at universities around the world have embarked in a novel endeavor: that of bringing together a constant group of international experts for frequent consultations on strategic and key decisions concerning the institution. This paper discussed the composition, structures, modes of operation, member motivations, institutional rationales, and the effectiveness of such structures. We label these bodies as International Advisory Councils (IACs). We define an international advisory council simply as an *advisory body formed primarily or exclusively by international members, external to the institution, serving the upper levels of the administration and governance of a tertiary education institution*.

Internationalization, university rankings and the quest for becoming a "world-class institution", and the increasing presence of external advisory bodies at universities around the world as a result of new public management practices have shaped universities in recent years. Internationalization (de Wit, Hunter, Howard, & Egron-Polak, 2015; Rumbley, Altbach, & Reisberg, 2012) refers to the movement of students, staff, curriculum and indeed institutions themselves (Lane, 2011) across national borders. Global rankings have impacted institutional strategies and national policies (Hazelkorn, 2011). Under their pressure many universities are aspiring to become world-class (Salmi, 2009) and are taking concrete actions to achieve this goal. With the aid of international experts, governments around the world are establishing excellence initiatives designed to propel selected institutions in global rankings (Salmi, 2016). At the same time, universities voluntarily and increasingly seek external advice in their decision-making and governance processes (Boer, Enders & Schimank, 2007). The external advice comes from entities such as advisory bodies, boards of trustees, students and industry stakeholders. Occasionally,

external advice is given by international organizations such as the World Bank, the OECD or regional governmental entities, such as the European Commission. IACs emerge at the intersection of these three trends. We are convinced that international advisory councils are a new and important part of higher education internationalization—and that these councils can provide valuable assistance to the universities that use them. Our analysis also shows that there is much that can be learned to improve the effectiveness and salience of these councils.

The first part of the paper introduces the methodology behind this study. For the purpose of this research, we interviewed 20 members of IACs and 6 representatives of institutions hosting IACs. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to analyze the content of transcribed interviews. Altogether, information about 28 IACs located across the world was collected. Results of the thematic analysis are described during the second and most extensive section of the study. The next section also introduces an emergent *typology of IACs*. The paper concludes with a discussion about *internationalization of governance*, a broader phenomenon that explains the emergence of IACs.

Data Collection and Study Design

To date, no systematic research aimed at mapping or explaining the activity of IACs exists. This research project was initiated as an exploratory study of IACs, seeking a better understanding of their development and functions. We conducted skype and phone interviews to capture this geographically scattered phenomenon. For this purpose, two semi-structured interview protocols were designed. One interview protocol aimed at capturing the experience of members of IACs, and a second protocol was designed for representatives of universities hosting IACs. Members of various IACs were asked questions about their personal involvement with IACs, about the mode

of operation of IACs, and about their reasons for joining an IAC. The interview protocol for representatives of institutions hosting IACs included a section on the rationale behind their existence and their relevance to the university. Additionally, representatives of universities were asked to describe the history and the structure of their IACs. Research participants were recruited using a snowball data collection procedure (Atkinson & Flint, 2004). The procedure implies that suggestions for additional respondents from prior interviewees were utilized to contact future interviewees. We also used web searches as a way of locating additional potential participants. Interviews lasted between 15 minutes and 45 minutes. Interviewees that participated in this research are highly reputable professionals, including university presidents, global leaders in fields such as economics and the sciences, and known higher education experts.

The thematic analysis method designed by Braun and Clarke (2008) was used for the purpose of conducting the data analysis. Interview transcripts are used to generate initial codes. Emergent codes are sorted in an attempt to create overarching themes. The process of identifying themes focused firstly on comparing codes across questions, then across members of IACs and representatives of TEIs hosting IACs, and lastly across the different interviewees that discussed the same IACs. Next, themes are reviewed in an effort to assure the availability of data to support them.

Cumulatively, the 26 interviewees provided information on 28 distinct IACs. These IACs are located in 20 countries, on all continents, with Western Europe having the highest concentration. Table 1 illustrates the regional distribution of the IACs for which data was collected. We have purposely not named the countries where the IACs are located because many countries

have very few IACs and by disclosing their country location, the confidentiality for IAC members or IAC representatives could not be assured.

Table 1 placed here

Data analysis

Profile of IAC Members

According to our interviewees, IAC members have one of the following profiles, in order of frequency (1) current or former high level administrators of universities (usually presidents, vice-chancellors or rectors), (2) higher education researchers, (3) researches that specialize in the current or aspiring area of expertise of the host institution, (4) researchers that specialize their study on the country where the IAC is located, (5) individuals with a policy background, and (6) industry representatives. A few other categories of members, such as secondary education experts, can be found serving on IACs. IACs often make strategic decisions regarding the membership composition—this will be discussed later in the paper. The IAC landscape seems to be heavily dominated by males, from Western countries, largely from the United States, and often affiliated to prestigious institutions.

Terms of Appointment

Fixed and *open term* appointments are both prevalent among IACs. On fixed-term appointments, one interviewee critically mentioned

> *No, there are not fixed appointments (...) and from the university's point of view, they should specify the time. They can renew you, because they do not have a way of getting rid of, a little bit of embarrassment, of people that do not come, or are useless (Interviewee 1, Member of IAC).*

Another interviewee described "I think there are both (fixed and open terms). There are institutions that have been more clever in establishing terms, which in my opinion is the best idea" (Interviewee 19, Member of IAC). On fixed terms among IACs, one interviewee recounted

(Name of institution) set guidelines with the terms of reference, with how many years and renewal references. The (name of institution) is just starting up and I was invited in the inaugural meeting, where one of the tasks I had to accomplish was to look at what would be the terms of references including the term of appointment (Interviewee 12, Member of IAC).

Changes in senior leadership in the universities hosting the IAC seem to affect the composition of the IAC and determine changes in membership composition. "No, there were no fixed terms, but I remember that in all cases the leadership changed over time and members left or were dropped off, and then some people were added. And it seems that I was one of the people that stayed on all of the time" (Interviewee 7, Member of IAC) one interviewee stated.

How are Members of IACs Recruited?

Most IAC members are known by or had prior contact with the host institution before joining the IAC. One interviewee said "I received an honorary degree from (name of institution), gave a talk there, and subsequently I was invited by the dean of the faculty of sciences" (Interviewee 3, Member of IAC), while another member stated "well, in both cases I knew people there and I was asked by people that were personal friends" (Interviewee 8, Member of IAC). The selection mechanisms of members based on prior contact with the institution or through social networks is confirmed by multiple other interviewees:

... many times is because you know people who are sort of engaged in the activity or because they invite you to something that is intriguing and interesting, or because you are familiar with the institution and now you know that they are interested in exploring the international angle. (Interviewee 19, Member of IAC).

Exceptions exist, and a few interviewees were contacted "out of the blue" (Interviewee 12, Member of IAC) by the institution hosting an IAC, as in this case

I had no connection to (name of institution), but they knew my work and they were establishing the advisory board and they looked to an international composition focused only on the internationalization policy, so they asked for my CV (Interviewee 10, Member of IAC).

In one case, the host institution gathered recommendations for IAC members from faculty and colleagues within the institution. Importantly, in deciding which IAC members to select, this host institution preferred members that did not have comparable appointments with other tertiary education institutions in order to avoid conflicts of interest

We gathered information from across the university and colleagues were asked to provide nominations, given their own contacts internationally, and not only internationally, but in (name of host country) as well. We came with a short list. We started with approximately two dozen and we approached all of them. Some of them declined for various reasons: they had other commitments, they were too busy or they were serving on comparable bodies and they correctly regarded a dual service as a conflict of interest (Interviewee 26, Representative of TEI).

What Motivates Members to Join IACs?

Members of IACs tend to be highly established professionals who are "the best in their field, or who have made extraordinary accomplishments in science, education, or other fields" (Interviewee 21, Member of IAC), as one interviewee describes them. At the same time most of them do not receive monetary compensation for their activity on IACs. As such, the question of what motivates members to contribute towards the activity of IACs remains. According to interviewees, to a large extent, members of IACs see this activity as a form of *academic service*. One interviewee, a retired higher education professional captures this theme:

> *I have been doing this for most of my life, in higher education particularly, and now that I am a bit further in life, I am a bit older, people keep on asking me to keep coming back or join other advisory councils. And I think I have some experience and I know the literature and I have done that a number of times. So it motivates me to be able to assist, so I like doing it. (Interviewee 17, Member of IAC).*

The specific institutions where members undergo academic service, or "academic citizenship" (Interviewee 7, Member of IAC) are often determined by a number of factors which include the *importance of a relationship* with either *the country* where the IAC is located, *the institution* itself, or *specific individuals* operating at the level of the institution. In elaborating on his motivation one interviewee describes the relation with the institution as follows "I have had some relationship with (name of institution) before that, I think, in terms of research (...) and had a lot of respect for what that university is trying to accomplish in the (name of country) context, and I tried to be helpful" (Interviewee 1, Member of IAC), while another one stated:

> *Well, I am a specialist in (name of country), I am fluent in (official language), I have many contacts over there, I go back and forward a lot through various networks and, you know,*

for us, for people who study that part of the world is in our interest for (name of country) higher education to become more open, transparent and cooperative (Interviewee 6, Member of IAC).

Personal relations were quite apparent in the motivation of several IAC members as illustrated by one interviewee "in both cases I had a personal contact. As I said (name), a researcher in higher education, we actually coauthored things together. She was a professor at (name of institution), and then she became a (high administrative position) with the rector's office" (Interviewee 14, Member of IAC). Supporting the importance of personal connection, one interviewee stated "I was friends with people there so I basically did it as a favor to them" (Interviewee 8, Member of IAC).

The *personal relation with other members on the IAC* becomes an additional motivating factor. Often interviewees discussed the stimulating and collegial environment that IACs offer. For one interviewee this stemmed from the international nature of IACs "it's an opportunity for me to get to know people in another country, which I enjoy, I enjoy working with people from other countries, and these boards contain very interesting people" (Interviewee 3, Member of IAC), while another interviewee stated "you always meet people that are knowledgeable. Its contacts, its networking" (Interviewee 16, Member of IAC).

An additional source of motivation for members of IACs is the learning opportunity provided by access to a new university and tertiary education system. For one interviewee, a tertiary education expert, the opportunity to stay connected to the institutional realities of tertiary education was a motivating factor:

I am very interested to keep up to date with what is happening at the institutional level reform. I do not want to lose touch with what happens at the institutional level. I do not work too much at the institutional level (....) I am more national, regional and global (Interviewee 12, Member of IAC).

Another interviewee describes the learning opportunity given by membership on various IACs as *a valuable tool in the work conducted in their home institution*. In this case the interviewee suggested that staying connected is key in remaining fully informed:

... for me it is very interesting. I know very many of the European university systems and it was good for me, as the president of (name of home institution), to know that my knowledge of the different systems is still up to date and where the problems are. Of course, by learning about that I use this knowledge to try to do better in (home institution), where I served as president for 10 years. Europe has a diversity of higher education systems; the Finnish university has nothing to do with the Greek. It's extremely diverse, and if you want to keep informed, you have to keep connected (Interviewee 20, Member of IAC).

Feeling that their *opinion was valued*, as stated by one interviewee, and they were offered a *chance to make an impact,* becomes a key component for the retention of IAC members. In the case of one interviewee, feeling useful was the main criteria in determining to continue as a member of various IACs "I have to feel that I can be useful to them, it's not like I am used for name dropping, but I feel that my expertise is useful to them" (Interviewee 10, Member of IAC). Another interviewee described the possibility to make an impact as a complementary element to the learning opportunity that membership on IACs offers:

I do not do that just for the sake of doing, or because I may know everything about international issues. I also think it's because I think I can contribute to the board (Interviewee 19, Member of IAC).

Membership on IACs was not only viewed as a source of learning, but also as an *opportunity for advocacy.* One interviewee stated:

(Name of home organization) carries certain values that I feel very committed to and so that is also the reason why I want to take part. When you see an institution that is commercial, I can bring in what I believe should be the values to consider to the table, and so I think I am committed to doing that as well as to learning (Interviewee 20, Member of IAC).

Interviewed participants described IACs as an opportunity for academic service and as spaces of learning and for making meaningful contributions. The collegial nature of IACs and the relationships built among members added to the reasons for which members continue their involvement.

Typical IAC Organization

IACs are organized in a variety of ways and configurations. These variations carry across elements such as the number of members, the number of meetings per year, the duration of meetings, membership status, and the hierarchical structure of the IACs. The IACs for which data was collected as part of this research most commonly are composed of 6 to 14 members. However, differences were encountered, as the smallest IAC reported 4 members and the largest reported 30 members. Typically, IACs meet once or twice a year, but few meet more frequently, up to four times a year. The meetings last as little as half a day, but are sometimes stretched over three days,

and in one case four full days. The most common length ranges between one day and a half and two days. In most cases, the IAC does not have a chair, and the meetings are moderated by the university leaders, frequently the president or rector of the institution. In the few cases when the IAC has a chair, she/he is usually appointed by the host university. Most IAC meetings include social programs for members. These social events serve as a form of reward for members, and to solidify networking between members and the institutions themselves.

Functions of IACs

As perceived by IAC members and supported by TEI representatives, the main function of IACs is to provide external advice on the design and implementation of the university's overall strategy. But often, IACs serve functions beyond an advisory role, such as providing internal and external legitimacy for institutional policies, becoming a buffer body between the institution and State actors and bringing prestige to the institution. The functions and motivations encountered throughout the interviews are presented below in the form of rationales. These rationales are not mutually exclusive and multiple rationales support the creation of an IAC.

Most often, both members of IACs and representatives of institutions hosting them mention what is described as the *quality or improvement rationale* in justifying the activity and existence of an IAC. Under this rationale, institutions "really want advice" (Interviewee 25, Member of IAC) and aim at obtaining expertise from respected academic leaders and distinguished scholars, including diverse perspectives from around the world, in order to improve the institution across a number of diverse goals as illustrated by the quotes below:

> *I would say that there is a desire to learn best practice from other parts of the world, to learn about what is good practice. I think there is an interest in extending their*

understanding about how other countries in the world are undertaking institutional reform (Interviewee 12, Member of IAC).

Highlighting the impact IACs have on the governance of a TEI, one institutional representative stated

... we wanted to have the best possible advice for achieving our mission, from stakeholders that are not naturally involved in your governance structure. You have the rector, the faculty and the students that is your common sense representation in your governance structure. But you do not really have employers, people from research, people with a global view or people from secondary education. We wanted to make sure that we have a wide range of stakeholders helping us achieve our mission as an institution (Interviewee 15, Representative of TEI).

We label a second motivation encountered in the data as the *prestige rationale*. In some cases, the aim and drive behind the creation of an IAC is to boost the prestige of the university through association with key international representatives. This rationale is most transparent in the response of members rather than university representatives, as illustrated by Interviewee 1 "They think it will boost their brand image by having some international scholar or other international people affiliated with them, that they put on their website, which they do in our case, they have our picture" (Interviewee 1, Member of IAC). Interviewee 2 (Member of IAC) stated "at the (name of institution) are keen on improving and becoming more international. Also, in that case, I think there is a prestige element, you know, we have these prestigious people as our members". The same rationale is highlighted in the quote below:

Well, I think it's a way of getting some outside advice and some outside validation. It is a way that an institution can improve itself and also tell the world that there are some famous people who are associated with the place (Interviewee 8, Member of IAC).

In a few instances, *external rationales* were mentioned as a reason for the establishment of the IAC. In these cases, IACs were established to fulfill the recommendations of external stakeholders, especially in the context of various excellence initiatives across the world. In at least one case, the national legislative framework directly mandates the creation of a university-wide scientific board that includes an equal number of international and national members. While discussing the rationale for the creation of the university-wide IAC, one university representative said the following "it is in the law, but at the second level and the only thing the law says is that there should be as many insiders as outsiders (international members). So it could have been 4 and 4" (Interviewee 23, Representative of TEI).

The *mimetic rationale*, that is the desire to match the activities of close competitors, is another drive detected among IACs. An example of this rationale is given in the following quote "I am not entirely sure why they established the group, but I imagine that a certain amount of it had to do with imitating what was going on next door at (name of competitor institution) (....) and since (name of competitor institution) had an international advisory council, (name of institution) needed one too" (Interviewee 13, Member of IAC).

IACs are sometimes viewed as tools that facilitate *internal legitimacy* within the governance structures of the institutions. They increase the legitimacy of internal decisions to internal stakeholders by having them discussed and endorsed by the IAC members. In this way,

controversial decisions may be presented as the opinion, or endorsement of international experts, as in this case:

> *The fourth reason is legitimacy or making use for government. It's like just saying because international experts say we should do that. I will give you an example. We are looking into salaries that partially depend on the productivity of the faculty members. This bonus for publication activity is an important part of the salary. There is always a big part of a discussion. We implement changes every year, and people are not happy that their salary structure changes every year, but when you say that international experts said that this is important, people understand (Interviewee 5, Representative of TEI).*

Similarly, the *external legitimacy rationale* was also encountered in some of the interviews. IACs may serve to increase the legitimacy of internal decisions for external stakeholders "sometimes people from the ministry do not want to look bad in the international environment. Sometimes we are saying that is important not to lose face in front of the international experts, and sometimes it works" (Interviewee 5, Representative of TEI). Another interviewee describes the external legitimacy rationale in a positive light, as illustrated below

> *The other reasons are probably political, in a good sense. Because a lot of these universities are public, they have to deal with the ministry, or the funding agency. By having an advisory committee, it serves as an independent piece of evidence. The president will never come in and say "I need your help to fight this ministry", but when we agree, they can use that. Sometime they can also use that internally in changes. One thing is the president to say: "I want to do this", but it's another thing to say: "my independent*

advisory committee, based on their experience, also suggest this". (Interviewee 25, Member of IAC).

Generally applicable to small countries, the *knowledge gap rationale* explains the emergence of IACs in several instances. In these cases, IACs are created to complement knowledge gaps that are perceived to exist at the university or at the national level. In commenting on this issue, one interviewee mentioned "(name of country) is way too small, you do not want (nationals) on the board, you need internationals when you are in a small country, and you need the international perspective" (Interviewee 18, Representative of TEI), while another confirmed this to be the case for an institution located in a different country "for years they were discussing and they wanted to have a very international university. And part of it was also to have the international advisory and the governing boards to have foreigners. In fact, there were basically no (nationals) with the necessary level of competence" (Interviewee 23, Representative of TEI).

The *cost-benefit rationale* seems to be another reason why universities are willing to create IACs. In most cases, members of IACs do not receive an honorarium. This means that the cost to universities is generally limited to travel, accommodation and meals for a generally small group of individuals. From an institutional perspective, this cost is not high compared with the returns. In answering questions about the budget of the IAC, one institution representative stated "if you compare it to the amount that we invest in other initiatives, it is not that much" (Interviewee 22, Representative of TEI), while a member of multiple IACs stated "I think the value of these IACs is to really have somebody speak their minds frankly, professionally, and give you advice that you might accept. This is a cheap way of getting advice from a very experienced group" (Interviewee 2, Member of IAC).

A few IACs for which data was gathered as part of this research seemed to exist only for *public relations and symbolic reasons*. These IACs did not seem to accomplish any tangible activities, and in one case it did not meet at all. In describing the experience with two IACs, both of which had between 20 and 30 members that met for four hours to discuss a rather lengthy agenda, one interviewee mentioned:

> *I do not think these advisory boards have been too useful. And one of the main reasons to me is that instead of taking one subject and one problem and discussing it, we talk a little about too many things. Therefore, most of what we say are platitudes and it is relatively superficial. I might be able to see a little bit, this is very small statistics, but in most cases it's done because it's supposed to be done (Interviewee 16, Member of IAC).*

Effectiveness of IACs

This section discusses the perception of IAC members on the effectiveness of IACs. Elsewhere we provide an overview of the suggestions given interviewees and our own observations on how successful IACs can be created and how existing IACs can be improved (Altbach, Mihut, & Salmi, 2016).

The observations of members and institutional representatives reflected a mixed picture concerning the effectiveness of IACs. Many of the interviewees have been members of more than one IAC. This allowed them to offer a comparative sense of the effectiveness among various IACs, and more importantly, where the differences in effectiveness stem from. While no definition of effectiveness was provided to interviewees, two criteria of measurement for effectiveness emerged during the data analysis of the interviews. The first effectiveness criterion is *the extent to which the universities considered and followed the advice offered by IAC members*. Implementation of

advice by the institution illustrates to members the tangible and meaningful impact that their activity has, and justifies creating and maintaining the IACs from the perspective of institutions. The second effectiveness criterion is the smooth *organization of the IAC activity*. Effective management of IACs can be increased by offering meaningful and transparent information about the institution to members, crafting targeted agendas, selecting members appropriate to the needs of the institution and reaching out to IAC members to leverage their expertise.

Few interviewees identified IACs with a *low level of effectiveness*. One interviewee associated the low level of effectiveness of IACs to the prestige acquisition function that multiple IACs meet.

> *I must say that in all cases I have a little bit of a question mark about their effectiveness. It looks like many of those institutions use the board as a kind of name-dropping and to show to the internal and external stakeholders that they have an advisory board that is internationally experienced and recognized. So it's a reputation game, and not always very effective in terms of making use of the board. Also, given that in an IAC people have to travel, you do not have many meetings (....) In my experience, mostly you come to the meetings, you get your reports for the meeting before the meeting, you discuss at the meeting, and then you wait until the next round, which I found very ineffective (Interviewee 10, Member of IAC).*

Another interviewee labeled less effective IACs as "symbolic" (Interviewee 19, Member of IAC). In this case, the symbolic, non-functioning IAC the interviewee discussed never convened for actual advice or discussions with the institution.

Most IACs for which data was collected were identified as having a mixed level of effectiveness. In comparing the experience of two different IACs, one interviewee stated "I do not think that the (name of first IAC) is getting as much as they could or should. I think the (name of second IAC) are doing well, considering their culture. I think we are giving them good value for their money" (Interviewee 2, Member of IAC). In illustrating how the advice given by the IAC was followed at two distinct institutions, one interviewee discussed the varied level of openness in the two cases "certainly (name of first IAC) did to a certain extend. I think on the (name of second IAC) we provided very good advice, but to be honest, I think the leadership was defensive, and they could have gained a lot more from the board, if they were prepared to listen to our advice" (Interviewee 3, Member of IAC).

A few IACs were praised by their members for achieving a *high level of effectiveness*. One interviewee suggested that:

The composition of the (name of institution) panel was rather intelligent, because they selected rectors from (host country) and other countries, and they also have selected a number of deans at (peer institution according to field of specialty) that gave them a better comparative analysis. I think that in the case of (name of institution) the president has surrounded himself with some of the best people in the world in quality assurance. (Interviewee 14, Member of IAC).

The effectiveness of IACs is strongly influenced by its relationship to the leadership of the institution. The very existence of the IAC may change suddenly as a result of changes in leadership. One interviewee recalled the experience with an IAC that dissolved before our interview took place. The decision making process that determined the closure of the IACs was not transparent,

but the interviewee suggested that a change in leadership at the institutional level triggered the closure. In another case, one IAC paused its activity temporarily also as a result of changes at the leadership level, but a university representative indicated that it will resume its operation soon, with a different composition. At the other end of the spectrum, another IACs survived after changes at the leadership level of a different institution, nonetheless, several changes in membership were made. The volatility of IACs in relation to the governance composition of the institutions can partially be explained by the personal relationships that drive the appointment of IAC members, and the need for new leadership structures to build trust with the IAC structures they will intimately work with.

Typology of IACs

The data gathered through the interviews allow us to create a simple typology of IACs (Table 2). We have identified three broad types of IACs, based on the main purposes universities identify for their IAC, and the ways in which universities make use of these bodies: (i) transformative, (ii) prestige-oriented, and (iii) symbolic. In the first case, the universities actually use the advice provided by IACs. In the second case, the universities are mainly interested in the prestige associated with the profile, experience and visibility of IAC members. In the last case, the universities go through the motion of establishing and running an IAC but do not take much or any advantage from its presence.

Table 2 placed here

A *transformative IAC* is focused on institutional improvement, and the universities are interested in ensuring that the councils are organized to provide targeted advice. The selection of members to join transformative IACs focuses on the needs of the institution and its broad strategic

goals. Members are often experts in areas of the institution's interest, and come from peer universities. In order to increase effectiveness, members tend to serve for a fixed period of time, with possibilities for renewal. Examples of how the activity of the IAC and the advice provided were incorporated at the level of the institution were frequently given by our interviewees for transformative IACs. A transformative IAC can evolve to meet the changing needs of the institution it serves, which allows it to maintain relevance over time. The quote below by a university representative discusses three evolving stages the IAC hosted underwent:

> *...this was the first period, so the council was acting close to the process of developing a potentially successful project for (excellence initiative project of the country). In the second period we were discussing the outcomes, the results of the project which was already funded by means of the (excellence initiative project of the country). (....) And there was a third period when we were identifying potential key topics for joint discussions. For instance, digitalization or the general aim of international activity (....) So according to these different phases, the international council was contributing to different fields. I think the first was that all critical remarks concerning the ongoing project in the launching period were taken very seriously, so they were influencing the settings of the proposal. In the second period the general assessments were also taken very seriously because this was a kind of early evaluation and this was exclusively offered by the international council (Interviewee 22, Representative of TEI).*

Noteworthy, transformative IACs often include discussions concerning institutional research excellence, internationally or regionally, but its purposes are multidimensional and span across different aspect of an institution.

A *prestige-oriented IAC* derives from the desire of the university to gain visibility from association with prestigious individuals and leverage the expertise of professors and leaders of prestigious institutions to enhance the reputation of the host university. While a transformational IAC focuses on a breath of dimensions relevant to the institution, prestige-oriented IACs have a one-dimensional focus of facilitating prestige acquisition, often as defined by institutional rankings. Members of a prestige-oriented IAC tend to originate from highly prestigious institutions abroad, and benefit from open terms. The host institutions are more likely to offer an honorarium for member involvement. While the effectiveness of prestige oriented IACs may be high, the evidence throughout the data suggests a mixed level of effectiveness.

Lastly, *symbolic IACs* often bring little contribution to the improvement of the institution. In our research, three cases of symbolic IACs were identified. In one case, the members of the IAC never met physically or virtually, and the host institution requested no service from the IAC members. In the other two cases, while the IACs met, the meeting lasted for half a day, included between 20 and 30 members and the agenda was too long to allow for meaningful contributions to be collected from IAC members. In all cases, the members on symbolic IACs had open terms.

The emergence of IACs and the internationalization of governance

This paper described the emergence of IACs at institutions across the world. IACs are emblematic of three broad trends affecting higher education world-wide: (i) internationalization, (ii) university rankings, and (iii) the increased presence of external advisory bodies. At the same time, IACs indicate the increasing significance of *internationalization of governance*. *Internationalization of governance encompasses the direct and indirect effects that*

internationalization have on the governance structures of tertiary education at the institutional, system and supranational levels.

Broadly, the relevant academic literature defines internationalization by referencing various forms of mobility, including that of staff, students and scholars across national borders (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2010; Choudaha & de Wit, 2014; Douglass & Edelstein, 2009), the circulation of educational curriculum (Brewer & Leask, 2012), and the mobility of institutions through branch campuses (Lane, 2011). A second stream of recent focus within the internationalization literature concerns itself with the policies put in place by governments to help institutions achieve the status of world class universities, get better results in the global rankings, (Salmi, 2016) and manage the effects of internationalization (Helms, Rumbley, Brajkovic, & Mihut, 2015).

In this context, internationalization is starting to shape the governance process itself. This happens not only through shifting the content focus of policies and institutional strategies that are typically done by traditional governance structures, but also through the creation of complementary structures that have an imbedded international dimension. Such governance structures often take the form of international advisory bodies to various traditional governing structures such as governments, ministries and other decision-making agencies and through supranational structures and initiatives. Throughout this research, interviewees frequently mentioned adjacent instances where *internationalization of governance* occurs in addition to IACs. These instances included the creation of permanent international advisory councils at the national level focused on improving quality assurance practices, temporary advisory councils to offer international perspective on drafting national higher education legislation, international advisory

councils at the level of independent academic programs, university initiatives or departments, the appointment of international members as key governance actors with the university, and the inclusion of external international members on traditional university senates. These examples represent tangible manners in which the internationalization of higher education directly changes the operation of higher education governance structures. In light of the increased impact of internationalization of higher education worldwide, the importance and impact of *internationalization of governance* is likely to amplify.

Conclusion

IACs are a fast growing phenomenon, particularly in Europe. However, they are difficult to research because little information about them is available publicly. IACs are bodies of varying size and composition, often including distinguished university researchers and current or former leaders of prestigious tertiary education institutions around the world, as well as higher education researchers. In most cases, IAC members do not receive financial compensation for their advisory services, and interviewees describe their contribution to IACs as a form of voluntary academic service, of giving back to the tertiary education arena. IACs meet a variety of functions for institutions. These functions include quality improvement or enhancement, prestige acquisition, and legitimizing institutional policies both to internal and external stakeholders. As a result of the thematic analysis advanced by this paper, we identify three types of IACs: (i) transformative, (ii) prestige oriented, and (iii) symbolic.

The interviews show that, when IACs are designed and operate in an effective manner, they can be a highly relevant tool for bringing international perspectives to the governance structures of institutions, and providing guidance from external experts who have a genuine

commitment to the institution. The extent to which universities and other types of tertiary education institutions can benefit from having an IAC depends, primarily, on their ability to convene a diverse group of dedicated experts and practitioners and their willingness to engage with them in a candid and open conversation about the institution's mission, achievements and actual shortcomings.

IACs represent a tangible, yet not a unique manner through which internationalization is shaping the structures of higher education governance. We label these instances as *internationalization of governance* and expect that its manifestations will only amplify in the future.

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Table 1 (Mihut, Altbach, Salmi)

Geographical Distribution of the IACs Identified

South America	Southern Africa	Oceania	Eastern Asia	Middle East	Eastern Europe	Southern Europe	Western Europe	Northern Europe	North America	**Total**
1	2	1	4	3	3	1	10	2	1	**28**

Table 2 (Mihut, Altbach, Salmi)

Typology of IACs

	Transformative	**Prestige oriented**	**Symbolic**
Leading rationale	Improvement	Visibility	Public relations
Terms of office	Fixed	Open	Open
Composition of members	Expert/Peer institutions	Representative of prestigious universities	Varied/Political composition
Overall effectiveness	Rather high	Mixed	Rather low