

**FOUNDATION SCHOOL OF COMMERCE ÁLVARES PENTEADO -
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PROFESSIONAL MASTER'S PROGRAM IN ADMINISTRATION**

LORIS GIGLIUTO

**INTERNATIONALIZATION PROCESS OF THE BRAZILIAN
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM WITH REFERENCE TO THE FECAP
CASE**

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Article (Master's) - Alvares Pentead School of
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Advisor: Prof. Dr. Edson Ricardo Barbero

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LORIS GIGLIUTO

INTERNATIONALIZATION PROCESS OF THE BRAZILIAN UNIVERSITY SYSTEM WITH REFERENCE TO THE FECAP CASE.

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**Internationalization process of the Brazilian university system with reference to the
FECAP case.**

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Abstract

This qualitative research explores the experiences and challenges encountered in the field of internationalization of Brazilian universities. The study examines the personal and professional paths of people involved in international education, highlighting the transformative power of intercultural competence and the importance of developing soft skills. The research also identifies barriers faced in the context of internationalisation, including the need for increased resources and funding to support students' study abroad opportunities. Furthermore, the study highlights the benefits of internationalisation, such as the opportunity for knowledge exchange, cultural understanding and the enhancement of research projects through global connections. Overall, the results underscore the importance of creating inclusive environments that foster cultural diversity and foster international collaborations. This research provides valuable insights for universities aiming to enhance their internationalization efforts and stimulates further exploration of related topics, such as funding mechanisms and strategies for maximizing the impact of international initiatives.

Key-words: Internationalisation. University. Intercultural Competence. Transversal Competences. Challenges. Global Connections. Cultural Diversity. Inclusive Environments.

Resumo

Esta pesquisa qualitativa explora as experiências e os desafios encontrados no campo da internacionalização das universidades brasileiras. O estudo examina os percursos pessoais e profissionais das pessoas envolvidas na educação internacional, destacando o poder transformador da competência intercultural e a importância do desenvolvimento de competências transversais. A pesquisa também identifica as barreiras enfrentadas no contexto da internacionalização, incluindo a necessidade de mais recursos e financiamento para apoiar as oportunidades de estudo no exterior dos alunos. Além disso, o estudo destaca os benefícios de internacionalização, como a oportunidade de troca de conhecimento, compreensão cultural e aprimoramento de projetos de pesquisa por meio de conexões globais.

No geral, as descobertas ressaltam a importância de criar ambientes inclusivos que promovam a diversidade cultural e promovam colaborações internacionais. Esta pesquisa fornece informações valiosas para universidades que buscam aprimorar seus esforços de internacionalização e incentiva a exploração adicional de tópicos relacionados, como mecanismos de financiamento e estratégias para maximizar o impacto de iniciativas internacionais.

Palavras-chave: Internacionalização. Universidade. Habilidades interculturais. Habilidades transversais. Desafios. Conexões globais. Diversidade cultural. Ambiente inclusivo.

Riassunto

Questa ricerca qualitativa esplora le esperienze e le sfide riscontrate nel campo dell'internazionalizzazione delle università brasiliane. Lo studio esamina i percorsi personali e professionali delle persone coinvolte nell'educazione internazionale, evidenziando il potere trasformativo della competenza interculturale e l'importanza dello sviluppo delle competenze trasversali. L'indagine individua anche gli ostacoli incontrati nel contesto dell'internazionalizzazione, compresa la necessità di maggiori risorse e finanziamenti per sostenere le opportunità di studio all'estero degli studenti. Inoltre, lo studio evidenzia i vantaggi dell'internazionalizzazione, come l'opportunità di scambiare conoscenze, comprensione culturale e il miglioramento dei progetti di ricerca attraverso connessioni globali. Nel complesso, i risultati sottolineano l'importanza di creare ambienti inclusivi che promuovano la diversità culturale e promuovano collaborazioni internazionali. Questa ricerca fornisce informazioni preziose per le università che desiderano migliorare i loro sforzi di internazionalizzazione e incoraggia l'ulteriore esplorazione di argomenti correlati come i meccanismi di finanziamento e le strategie per massimizzare l'impatto delle iniziative internazionali.

Parole-Chiave: Internazionalizzazione. Università. Competenze interculturali. Competenze trasversali. Sfide. Connessioni globali. Diversità culturale. Ambiente inclusivo.

1 Introduction

The phenomenon we call "globalization" is the result of a long process of opening that all economies have gone through over the years. The growing internationalization of activities has translated into a generalized expansion of trade, more or less accentuated, according to the characteristics of each country.

Universities are also called upon to guarantee rapid innovation of their skills in order to support international competitiveness and adopt internationalization policies that help the mobility of students, teachers and administrative staff, as well as the vehicular use of foreign languages, in particular English, the growth of international exchange, study and research programmes.

According to Soares and Oliveira (2021) the changes in society and the intensification of the globalization process in recent decades have triggered structural changes that have an impact on the economy, technology, politics and the binomial "production and consumption", making the companies and businesses go beyond the domestic space, looking for greater competitiveness, so much so that in optimizing internal and external processes, they tend to seek transactions on the international scene.

Firms operating in foreign institutional settings face pressures to gain social acceptance (commonly referred to as legitimacy) and difficulties in assessing market information, both of which undermine business performance (Yang, Su, & Fam, 2012).

It is widely recognized that cultural factors act as invisible barriers in international marketing communications. Understanding cultural differences is one of the most significant skills that companies need to develop to have a competitive advantage in international business (Tian & Borges, 2011).

Furthermore, as stated by Keller (2001), a difficult challenge for managers is the broad and diverse medium and communication options available to support their brands (e.g., television, print, and interactive advertising; consumer and trade promotions; arts, sports and cause sponsorships; etc.).

A progression of initiatives and projects concerning internationalization is underway in the universities, as well as the promotion of mobility of students, teachers and staff, both incoming and outgoing, through the stipulation of transnational agreements, also the introduction of programs in which English is used as a vehicular language; investing in wide-ranging research projects, with the aim of improving its profile worldwide (Altbach & Knight, 2007).

A valid and effective internationalization must permeate the policies and general guidelines of the University (purposes), the functions aimed at the operational achievement of these purposes (functions), the production and transmission of knowledge articulated in the research products or in the articulation of the training offer (delivery) of which excessive differentiation must be avoided, since a wider educational offer, if on the one hand stimulates

the demand of foreign students, on the other generates the problem of dispersion and fragmentation of individual study plans (Dordit & DeToni , 2019).

Students have the opportunity to acquire professional knowledge and experience other cultures and educational systems (Poole, 2004), carry out internships, find professional, living and working opportunities in a globalized world. All university teaching and non-teaching staff can benefit in terms of, for example, increased opportunities for interdisciplinary research and improved professional and work experience (Warakaulle, 2004).

But internationalization presents problems and resistances: for students the obstacles are mainly represented by the difficulties of adaptation, by the costs of travel and stay abroad which make international opportunities less accessible, by language barriers, by "culture shock" (Pritchard & Skinner, 2002).

The objective of this research is to understand what are the dynamics of internationalization of the educational offer, it will be essential to understand the challenges and opportunities that universities have to face in this expansion process. The methodology used consisted of a qualitative interview in which professors and administrators of the FECAP University of São Paulo were deeply questioned about the internationalization processes.

From a theoretical point of view, this research contributes to the study of the fundamental factors for the development of an international strategy within universities, with particular attention to internationalizing dynamics.

From a managerial point of view, this research provides fundamental skills for the managers of a company that wants to expand its borders, with particular reference to the educational offer, providing practical and useful tools to implement a winning strategy in the internationalization process of a ' university.

2 Context Theory

2.1 Globalization and internationalization

2.1.1 Definition of globalization

The literature defines internationalization as a process through which a company increases its level of involvement in foreign markets over time (Welch & Luostarinen, 1988), and traditionally considered as a series of events that take place over time (Leonidou & Katsikeas, 1996), or as Jones and Coviello (2005, p. 285) note: "By definition, internationalizing behavior occurs over time, manifesting itself in a timeline in which events occur."

2.1.2 Internationalization of activities

Internationalizing behavior encompasses a wide range of decisions and events that affect both the externally visible aspects of an organization and its internal profile. Welch and Luostarinen (1988) identify some of these aspects by noting: (1) the method of operation (how); (2) the objects of sale (what); (3) reference markets (where); (4) organizational ability; (5) personal; (6) organizational structure; and (7) finance; while Zahra and George (2002) distinguish three salient factors of internationalization: (1) scale; (2) breadth or scope; and (3) speed. The measure (or degree) refers to the level of commitment of the company in its process of expansion abroad, and it is possible to identify two different attitudes towards this problem. The first refers to the foreign sales effort and several studies have focused on export intensity analysis, considering the firm's exports as a share of total sales turnover (Zahra & George 2002). Sullivan (1994) has used this variable as an indicator of the degree of internationalization of a company, while other studies have taken a more global view of this commitment, considering the incidence of sales abroad (the sum of its exports and foreign subsidiaries) on the total turnover of the multinational (Sullivan, 1994). The second measure of the extent of a firm's commitment to internationalization is based on the level of resources it makes available for the process (Kuivalainen, Sundqvist, & Servais, 2007), with those having plants and branches abroad that demonstrate a greater involvement in internationalisation, allocating a greater share of their resources beyond national borders. Such overseas engagement carries increased risk, so business entry patterns (ranging from simple exports to wholly owned manufacturing subsidiaries, including all types of cooperation agreements, joint ventures and subsidiaries) may again indicate different levels of their international commitment.

Again Sullivan (1994) includes several indicators relating to this dimension, such as the number of foreign branches, the share of foreign operations, the share of employees in foreign branches and the percentage of added value generated by foreign branches. Breadth/scope is defined as the range of locations where the firm develops its business (Zahra & George 2002), covering the markets and/or countries where it sells or produces its products and services (Welch & Luostarinen, 1988). The internationalization of the company can be measured by the number of countries to which it exports its products, by the number of owned branches, by the diversification of its foreign markets, by the physical and/or cultural distance between the countries in which it operates.

The classical sequential approach assumes that firms start their internationalization process in only a few countries physically and culturally close to their national markets, and

progressively enter more and more distant countries as their internationalization processes progress (Andersen, 1993): therefore, the number, distance and different countries can be used as indicators of the degree of internationalization of the firm (Dow & Karunaratna, 2006). The third dimension of internationalization – speed – can be assumed as the rate of change in one of the two previous dimensions, and it is possible to identify three 'types' of speed in the internationalization process (Zahra & George, 2002). The first two refer to the intensity of a company's internationalisation, while the third refers to its degree. These three types of speeds are: (1) the speed of growth of a firm's international trade intensity; (2) the speed of its increase in resource commitments abroad; and (3) the speed of change in the breadth of its international markets.

2.2 Dynamics of the internationalization of universities

2.2.1 Expansion of international partnerships

The internationalization of higher education is a vast and articulated process, characterized by a plurality of political, socio-cultural, economic and academic logics and involves, in addition to universities, also regions, countries, institutions, private companies and civil society. Internationalization has been defined as the process of introducing an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of higher education at institutional and national levels (Knight, 2008). The term 'internationalisation' referring to tertiary education is sometimes understood as a synonym, sometimes as the opposite, of that of 'globalisation' (De Wit, 2011). The two concepts are interconnected but not perfectly coincident: the first indicates the educational and cultural sphere, assuming a positive and gratifying connotation, while the second alludes to transnational commercial exchanges (Altbach, 2004).

2.2.2 Internationalization actions

Each internationalization policy of a university is divided into three successive phases (Ayoubi & Habiabeh, 2006): 1) phase of planning strategic objectives, teaching programmes, partnerships, mobility, research, development of new disciplines with a transnational and intercultural vocation, cost - benefit analysis and risk management; 2) implementation of real actions and organizational measures for project execution; 3) evaluation of the internationalization process implemented with respect to the initial strategic project, with an examination of any obstacles and critical issues, such as financial problems, linguistic and cultural difficulties encountered as well as the advantages achieved.

2.2.3 Cost and accessibility

The main source of funding for mobility is the institutional budget followed by external, national and international public funding. If these are scarce or exhausted, international opportunities may then only be accessible to students with adequate financial resources. This is particularly true for degree-seeking students who decide to start and complete an entire course of study abroad, compared to the majority of credit-seeking students who instead spend a limited period of time in a foreign university (Dordit & DeToni, 2019).

2.3 Cultural factors and international marketing communication

2.3.1 - Barriers and challenges in intercultural communication and adaptation

International trade presents various obstacles which can be of a logistical nature, such as the difficulty of transferring goods due to geographical distance, or of another nature such as the different cultural, linguistic and institutional differences between countries. Regional cultural variations within a country are typically much less pronounced than abroad. Thus, in international trade, cultural costs differentiate international trade from interregional trade. There is some evidence that non-geographic costs are also important. The empirical literature has found that even controlling for distance, countries trade much less with each other than with regions within a country.

2.3.2 Border effect

To explain the 'boundary effect', there is a clear need to look more closely at cultural differences. Rauch (1999) believes that linguistic differences and historical ties significantly influence foreign trade. Hall and Jones (1999) find that belonging to a major language group improves a country's economic performance, even after accounting for a wide variety of factors. One possible explanation for this is that knowledge of a widely spoken language promotes trade and the exchange of ideas. Finally, Helliwell (1997) presents evidence that Canadian immigrants to the United States and American immigrants to Canadian provinces enhance trade with their country of origin. One probable explanation is that these immigrants possess knowledge of their home country's culture and institutions, so they can lower the cultural cost of trade between the two countries. Therefore, there is compelling evidence that cultural differences play an important role in international trade. Furthermore, there have been attempts to introduce cultural differences into international business patterns. Lazear (1999) constructs a model to examine the assimilation process of immigrants, which could easily be modified to model foreign trade. Cultural differences are important in Lazear 's framework because

individuals are randomly paired up to trade with each other, so communication difficulties result in less efficient interactions. Since learning by one party eliminates the need for learning by the other (just like in this model), there is an externality involved in learning, resulting in suboptimal investment levels. In Lazear's model, however, agents do not recognize their side's learning efforts, so the model ignores the strategic nature of learning. As Casella and Rauch (2003) argue, it is necessary to have a vision in relation to the research/network in the foreign country. Indeed, imperfect information about foreign countries (caused in part by cultural differences) acts as a barrier to trade, however information sharing networks can help overcome that barrier.

2.4 International companies and institutional legitimacy

2.4.1 Foreign institutional environment

Institutions are defined as the normative, normative, and cognitive structures that regulate and limit human activities to provide stability and meaning to social behavior (North, 1990). The institutional view holds that the institutional environments in which a firm operates significantly determine the effectiveness of its operations and performance. Hence, firms' strategic choices not only reflect their capabilities and industry conditions, but also represent the formal and informal constraints of their environmental institution (Hoskisson, Eden, Lau, & Wright, 2000). Internationalizing firms have been shown to adapt their practices in markets to environmental characteristics that influence the value of their resources and capabilities (Wright, Filatotchev, Hoskisson, & Peng, 2005). Highly valuable resources are often untradable in economies in transition, and managing obsolete resources and capabilities in these dynamic environments can be exceptionally challenging (Meyer & Peng, 2005). More specifically, implementing standard market resources and capabilities in such contexts can be challenging, as outcomes depend on existing key suppliers and technologies or other complementary host market resources such as infrastructure and manpower (Carranza, Maltz, & Antun, 2002).

2.4.2 Role of government policies

Institutions can regulate some areas of logistics, such as transport management, international trade and the location of facilities, the effects are manifested in the network design and logistics strategies of internationalizing companies. Mutual trust and communication conventions related to more informal institutions can also influence supply chain management (Yaibuathet, Enkawa, & Suzuki, 2008). Foreign companies evaluating the markets tend to focus on the formal institutional environment and overlook any in-depth analysis of how domestic

companies handle existing regulations and laws that would reveal potential conflicts and necessary adjustments in terms of operations and investments (Bevan, Estrin, & Meyer, 2004). Khanna, Palepu and Sinha (2005), have developed one of the few frameworks used to analyze national institutional environments. In their work, the authors refer to macro factors such as political systems, social systems and market liberalization (thus including both formal and informal institutions) and micro factors such as products, capital and labor markets.

2.5 Challenges and opportunities in the internationalization of the university

2.5.1 The challenges of internationalization of universities

Internationalization is a complex phenomenon in the field of higher education. Its complexity has emerged due to the vastness of the concept and the evolution of its meanings, approaches, elements and strategies. One of the major challenges of internationalization is the diversity of related terms. To date, there is no single agreed definition of the internationalization of higher education (Teichler, 2003).

The challenges of university internationalization can be approached from different perspectives. For example, according to Hemsley-Brown and Goonawardana (2007), one of the main obstacles is represented by the lack of a clear and coherent strategy for internationalisation. Cultural differences can affect international communication and collaboration, requiring the development of intercultural competencies for both academic staff and students (Knight, 2005). Furthermore, language barriers can limit access to internationalization opportunities and require efforts to improve language skills, both for students and university staff (De Wit, 2011). When international students come to a foreign country, they will experience being alien. This is due to cultural difference in both academic and social aspects (Hooley & Horspool, 2006).

They may experience a different teaching and learning style than in their home country. Language seems to be the main problem they faced in their learning. This is especially true when the English language is their second or foreign language. As regards the social aspect, these students may undergo psychological adaptations such as homesickness, loneliness, anxiety and communication problems (Akiba, 2008). International students have been found to find it difficult to mix with local students and seem to detach themselves from other local peers (Slethaug & Manjula, 2012). Another difficulty that international students have been facing is the financial problem which can lead to poor academic performance and other social problems. Even before leaving their home country, students had experienced some form of hardship; this includes issues related to immigration and admission into the country which could affect their

procedure for entering the country. This can lead to a delay in starting the first semester of study (Banumathy & Vikneswaran, 2008).

2.5.2 Opportunities in the internationalization of universities

Despite the challenges, internationalization also offers numerous opportunities for universities. For example, De Wit (2011) points out that internationalization can increase the attractiveness of universities in the eyes of international students, enabling them to offer a stimulating and diverse academic and cultural environment. This can lead to increased diversity and inclusion on campus. Internationalization can also contribute to the quality of education and research. International research collaboration can lead to increased knowledge production, access to complementary resources and expertise, and the creation of synergies between institutions. Furthermore, internationalization can foster academic innovation through the sharing of good practices and the adoption of new teaching approaches (Marginson, 2016).

Reasons for internationalizing a university curriculum also include rising levels of student demand for internationalized courses (Sangari & Foster, 1999), the growing influence of international and multinational corporations, and the large number of cross-border mergers, strategic alliances, expansions business and so on stimulated employers' need for staff with international knowledge and perspectives (Sharma & Roy, 1996). Globalization, according to Leggott and Stapleford (2007), had changed the "contexts" in which economics graduates could operate in the future. It followed that an internationalized curriculum was essential for business graduates to succeed in this new environment. Finally, internationalization offers professional and career development opportunities for university staff. International experience can enrich the knowledge base and global perspective of faculty and staff, thereby enhancing the quality of university teaching and management.

3 Methodology

The objective of this research, as already mentioned in the introduction, is to understand the dynamics of internationalization of the educational offer in Brazil, to identify the challenges and opportunities and to explore the policies and strategies implemented by universities in the internationalization process, all with the aim of identifying the critical factors determining this process. To implement this, a qualitative research was carried out in which the opinions and experiences of the various stakeholders (teachers, administrators) of the FECAP University of São Paulo were collected, on the effectiveness of internationalization initiatives. FECAP, whose full name is "A Fundação Escola de Comércio Álvares Penteado ", is a non-profit

Brazilian higher education institution whose field of study is business management. It was founded on June 2, 1902, and began the process of internationalization in 2008.

With research we want to estimate the response of a given population, called the universe, to a given query, questioning a limited number of people, called a sample, and collecting the results in relative terms, therefore a margin of error is possible. The scientific nature of the research depends precisely on the suitability of the sample to represent the universe statistically, and therefore to constitute a faithful representation of it (Brusati, 2003).

The interview took place face to face, three professors and two administrators were questioned. The two managers interviewed within the university have the role of managing the "international area" and managing international negotiations. As regards the professors, three professors involved in internationalization initiatives were interviewed, finding themselves involved in teaching projects for foreign students, as well as in initiatives for the management of internationalization processes and in outbonding initiatives. The questions were divided into three main blocks, the first which aims to understand the dynamics of the internationalization of the university; the second which aims to understand the challenges and opportunities faced by the FECAP; the third has the objective of exploring the experiences of the various stakeholders.

- a) Understand the dynamics of the internationalization of the educational offer:
 - What are the main internationalization initiatives and projects carried out by the FECAP University?
 - How is the mobility of students, teachers and staff promoted within the FECAP University?
 - How is the use of English as a target language encouraged and integrated into academic programs?
- b) Identify the challenges and opportunities faced by FECAP University in the internationalization process:
 - FECAP University has encountered in promoting the internationalization of the educational offer?
 - What were the most significant opportunities created by internationalization for FECAP University?
 - How does FECAP University deal with the pressures to gain social acceptance and value market information in foreign institutional contexts?
- c) Explore the experiences and opinions of various stakeholders:

- What has been your personal or professional experience in the field of internationalization of the educational offer?
- What are the main advantages you have found in being involved in the internationalization process?
- What are the main difficulties or obstacles you have encountered in the context of internationalisation?

The analysis of the answers to these questions made it possible to identify the critical factors in the internationalization process.

4 Search results

4.1 Dynamics of internationalization of the educational offer

FECAP University has been actively engaged in various internationalization initiatives and projects to provide its students with valuable international experiences and promote cultural exchange. The university has recognized the importance of international education and its transformative impact on students' perspectives, fostering a global mindset and enhancing their employability in an increasingly interconnected world. Indeed, internationalization arguably improves an institution's capabilities in relation to both teaching (De Wit, 2002) and research (Elkin, Farnsworth, & Templer, 2008). It also allows a university to evaluate its courses against international norms (Ayoubi & Masoud, 2007).

The internationalization activity of FECAP began in 2008, with the realization of agreements and partnerships with universities and institutions in the United States. The experience in the United States was achieved thanks to various strategic contacts of FECAP managers, since, as far as business is concerned, the USA is among the best in the world. Subsequently, agreements were established with universities in Europe, further expanding international study opportunities.

As already mentioned, FECAP began its internationalization process in 2008, however, it was in 2016 that FECAP further strengthened its commitment to the internationalization of the educational offer, making its campus more attractive for foreign students. This has involved both outbound initiatives, sending Brazilian students to study abroad, and inbound initiatives, bringing international students to FECAP. The establishment of the International Office has played a key role in guiding the internationalization process of FECAP. Among the financing methodologies obtained by FECAP was the partnership with the Santander bank, which offered scholarships to students which consisted in the possibility of studying abroad and receiving a considerable sum of money. In return, Santander required students to open a bank account with

the bank, which is a clear marketing strategy aimed at building loyalty with students. However, after the COVID19 Santander has not renewed this type of partnership with the FECAP university.

During its recent internationalization process, FECAP has partnered with numerous universities around the world, promoting academic collaboration and student exchange programs. FECAP has established agreements with universities in countries such as Spain, including Barcelona, Bilbao and Universidad de Granada, as well as universities in Ghana. In particular, FECAP has a strong partnership with Audencia Business School in France, contributing to the exchange of knowledge and skills between Brazil and France in sectors such as agribusiness, environmental protection and the economic sphere.

FECAP 's internationalization efforts are not limited to English-speaking countries. Recognizing the importance of language proficiency and cultural immersion, FECAP encourages students to explore opportunities in various Latin American countries, where they can enhance their English and Spanish language skills while gaining a deeper understanding of the local culture. This inclusive approach allows students to have a diverse range of experiences and broaden their global perspectives.

The university has also embraced the collaborative campus concept, as exemplified by its partnership with Audencia. This collaboration involves using the FECAP campus as an international collaboration hub in South America, providing a platform for knowledge exchange and corporate events. This provision strengthens the ties between FECAP and Audencia, creating academic and cultural exchange opportunities for students and faculty.

To further promote mobility, FECAP 's marketing department actively organizes webinars, seminars and international fairs to educate students about the opportunities available to study abroad. The department works in close collaboration with the International Office and makes use of the support of the Company Council, facilitating effective promotion and dissemination of information.

Proficiency in the English language is recognized as a crucial aspect of internationalization and employability. FECAP recognizes the global importance of English as a universal language and has integrated English as a second language as a compulsory subject in degree programs. This ensures that FECAP students graduate not only with strong technical skills, but also with a strong foundation in English language proficiency and soft skills. A business school can internationalize its curriculum by introducing stand-alone units to degree programs or by incorporating international materials into all (or nearly all) of its pre-existing modules (Avila, 2007).

Table 1

Internationalizing dynamics

Study abroad program	One of the most popular internationalization programs offered by the university. Students spend several months in European or Latin American universities to gain cultural immersion and professional development experience. Creating agreements with international institutions, such as St. Thomas University in Canada, to reduce financial obstacles.
Attract international students	The opportunity for the university to attract students from all over the world thanks to Brazil's large economy, cultural diversity and strategic location. The benefit of a cultural interaction for both students and professors, offering exposure to different perspectives and possibilities to expand international networks.
Social integration for foreign students	The measures adopted by the university to facilitate the social integration of foreign students in the Brazilian cultural context. The orientation sessions, the interaction between Brazilian students and international students, the support offered by the international office in terms of career orientation, psychological support and discovery of local attractions.
Challenges and opportunities deriving from the internationalization of the university	The challenges faced by the university in the internationalization process, such as motivating students to study abroad, improving the language skills of professors and students, obtaining certifications and establishing international partnerships. The opportunities that come with internationalisation, such as cultural exchange, improved employability, strategic partnerships and an enhancement of the university's global reputation.
Language support within the university for international students	The need to improve language support within the university to better assist international students, especially through programs offered in the English language.

4.2 Challenges and opportunities

The internationalization process of FECAP University has encountered several challenges and has created numerous opportunities. One of the major challenges faced by the university is the language barrier. Although the university aims to offer more courses in English, many Brazilian students do not have sufficient language skills to fully understand classes conducted in English. To meet this challenge, FECAP has made the knowledge of the English language a compulsory discipline in degree courses. This strategy ensures that students have a solid foundation in English before attempting courses conducted entirely in the language.

Brazil's unique linguistic context, with Portuguese as the predominant language, also presents a challenge in terms of internationalization efforts. Unlike other South American countries that speak predominantly Spanish, Brazil's linguistic divergence makes it more difficult to form closer ties with its Spanish-speaking neighbors. However, FECAP recognizes the importance of language proficiency and encourages students to explore opportunities in Latin American countries to improve their English and Spanish language skills while gaining a deeper understanding of different cultures.

FECAP's internationalization initiatives have created numerous opportunities. One of the most popular programs offered is the study abroad program, where students spend several months in European or Latin American universities. While the United States presents greater financial hurdles due to the high costs of institutions, FECAP has managed to establish agreements with institutions such as San Thomas University in Canada, which do not charge FECAP students tuition fees. This exchange program not only offers students cultural immersion but also opens up opportunities for professional development as they receive job offers or continue internships abroad.

The internationalization process also gives FECAP the opportunity to attract students from all over the world. Brazil's large economy, cultural diversity and strategic location make it an attractive destination for students from countries such as India, China and Europe. This cultural exchange benefits both FECAP students and professors, as they gain exposure to different perspectives and expand their international networks.

In terms of social integration for foreign students at FECAP, the university takes various measures to help them orient themselves in the different cultural context. Orientation sessions are conducted upon arrival, providing insight into Brazilian history, geography, politics, and cultural institutions. The interaction between the Brazilian students of FECAP and the international community is promoted to facilitate integration. The university's international

office plays a crucial role in supporting international students, offering guidance on job opportunities, psychological support and assistance in exploring local attractions. However, there is a need to improve English language support within the university to better serve international students, particularly through programs offered in English.

Turning to the broader challenges and opportunities of internationalization for a university, FECAP addresses challenges such as motivating students to study abroad and improving the qualifications of both professors and students. Encouraging students to recognize the importance of studying abroad and having a concrete plan for international experiences is an ongoing challenge. Language proficiency, particularly in English, remains a crucial area for improvement. FECAP aims to engage faculty members and staff in improving their English language skills and offering courses in English. Another significant challenge is obtaining the certifications, which would allow FECAP to establish partnerships with more universities around the world. The certifications represent a challenge that would also lead to various opportunities, this is seen as a challenge since a high expenditure of money is required to obtain them since the professors need to become faculty professors and not just part-time. As far as the opportunities deriving from the certifications are concerned, there is undoubtedly an increase in the prestigious image of the university, which would increase its attractiveness and therefore the possibility of obtaining agreements with other international universities.

However, the university recognizes the opportunities that internationalization presents. By attracting students and professors from different countries, FECAP can strengthen its research capabilities, foster strategic collaborations, and enhance its global reputation. Furthermore, the internationalization process enhances the employability of FECAP students, exposing them to different cultures, languages and career opportunities.

To facilitate the integration of different cultures, FECAP is committed to providing support and guidance to foreign students. Understanding the routine way of life, cultural nuances and learning about local customs and traditions are key to overcoming cultural differences. While some cultures may be more familiar to Brazilian students due to proximity or historical ties, efforts are made to improve the way students from different backgrounds are treated. FECAP offers support through its ASA (Social Assistance) programme, which assists students with various issues. However, there is a need to expand English language support within the ASA to better cater for international students.

Ultimately, the internationalization process presents both challenges and opportunities for FECAP University. Challenges include overcoming language barriers, motivating students to study abroad, improving the qualifications of teachers and students, and obtaining

certifications. On the other hand, opportunities include cultural exchange, improved employability, strategic partnerships with international institutions, and enhancing the university's reputation both locally and globally. By recognizing and addressing these challenges while leveraging the opportunities, FECAP University can continue to expand its internationalization efforts and create a more inclusive and globally connected learning environment.

Table 2

Challenges and opportunities

Main challenges in the internationalization process	Main opportunities in the internationalization process	financial constraints
Language barrier	Cultural exchange and enrichment of perspectives	Limited financial resources for internationalization programs
Unique linguistic context	Improved employability of students	High costs of institutions in the United States
Motivation of students to study abroad	Strategic partnerships with international institutions	Expenses for obtaining certifications
Improving the language skills of teachers and students	Improvement of the university's global reputation	Limited budget for language support
Obtaining certifications	Attracting students and professors from different parts of the world Improved research capabilities and strategic collaborations	Reduced funding for exchange programs

4.3 Explore the experience of stakeholders

Participants in this qualitative research shared their personal and professional experiences in the field of internationalization. They discussed their educational background, teaching experiences and involvement in various international conferences, associations and seminars. Their experiences ranged from studying in Brazilian universities to traveling abroad, interacting with professors from different countries and engaging in international projects. However achieved, internationalization of curriculum should result in graduates who think globally (Elkin, Farnsworth, & Templer, 2008), respect international diversity, are able to communicate effectively across borders, understand foreign affairs and practices, and are aware

of cultural differences and their causes (Killick, 2008). We analyze the details of their experiences and insights.

One participant mentioned studying at the University of São Paulo in the School of Communication and later teaching English as a second language at the Binational Center. Their main interaction has been with the United States and they have received training from the US State Department on international education in Brazil. This exposure has led to expanding opportunities in Canada, New Zealand and Australia. They stressed the importance of global connections and creating opportunities for FECAP University students. They also shared their participation in conferences organized by NAFSA (Association of International Educators) and FAUBAI (Brazilian Association of Education), as well as seminars and conferences by ISUF Conferences, a company based in Germany. They also mentioned attending an online seminar with the KQS Index from England, discussing internationalization and creating opportunities for students to study abroad.

Regarding the main benefits of the internationalization process, the participants emphasized the transformative power of education and the development of intercultural competences. They recognized that understanding different cultures and values is essential but can also be a challenge. They shared experiences of dealing with students from different backgrounds, such as Muslims, Jews, Catholics, Christians, and how it required them to remain neutral and navigate cultural sensitivities. They mentioned the importance of acknowledging and respecting students' educational backgrounds, as well as the difficulties that can arise due to cultural differences.

Regarding the main difficulties and obstacles encountered in the context of internationalisation, the participants expressed a common concern about the lack of resources. They mentioned the need to create a scholarship fund to support students studying abroad, which would require additional funding. They recognized that financial limitations may hamper FECAP University's internationalization efforts and limit the support they can provide to students.

Moving on to the personal experiences and professional growth of the participants in the field of internationalization, they shared their exposure to different universities, professors and international projects. They talked about their travels to European countries, such as Portugal, France and Spain, where they visited universities, discussed with professors and gained valuable information. Despite the challenges faced in their current positions, such as limited time for travel, they stressed the importance of connecting with professors from different parts of the world and the enriching experiences that internationalization brings. They

expressed a desire to be part of the international office in the future and highlighted the positive impact of internationalization on their personal and professional growth.

Participants also discussed the requirements and qualifications for managerial positions at an internationalized university. They recalled the importance of being a professor and having a passion for the role, along with a willingness to take on additional responsibilities and work on deals and projects. They highlighted the need to constantly improve the university's processes, negotiate with stakeholders and demonstrate interest in the management position. They also recognized the challenges that come with the role, such as the high workload and the impact on work-life balance.

Finally, the participants reflected on the main difficulties and obstacles encountered in their international careers. They stressed the need to prepare workers for international work, focusing on language skills and providing more scholarships for students to study abroad. They recognized that financial constraints may limit the university's ability to offer scholarships and expressed the need for more funding to effectively address these challenges.

Overall, participants' experiences in the field of internationalization varied, but all recognized the importance of global connections, intercultural competence and creating opportunities for students. They highlighted the transformative power of education, the benefits of learning from different cultures, and the opportunities for personal and professional growth that come with international experiences. They also highlighted the challenges related to resource constraints, language barriers and the demands of managerial positions. By addressing these obstacles and investing in internationalization efforts, FECAP University can further enhance its global vision, foster cultural exchange, and create a more inclusive learning environment.

Table 3

Experiences of the various stakeholders interviewed

Experiences of Managers	Professors' experiences
Experiences in coordinating and managing university internationalization initiatives	Experience in teaching international courses
Involvement in the creation of strategic partnerships with international institutions	Experiences in participating in cultural exchange programs
Address budgetary challenges and financial resources to support international programs	Experience in supervising international theses and research projects
Participation in international conferences and events to promote the university	Experiences in organizing international workshops and conferences
Management of communication and relations with international partners	Experiences in the publication of articles and researches in collaboration with foreign academics
Experience in managing the requests and needs of international students	Involvement in the evaluation and improvement of international programs
Involvement in the planning and implementation of student mobility programs	Participation in international networks and associations in the academic field

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this qualitative research explored the experiences, challenges and benefits associated with the internationalization of universities in Brazil, as shared by the participants. They discussed their personal and professional journeys in the field, highlighting the importance of global connections, intercultural competence and the transformative power of education. Participants stressed the need to create opportunities for students, enhance resources and support international initiatives within their respective institutions.

Several key themes emerged during the discussions. The importance of cultural sensitivity and understanding became evident, as participants shared experiences of navigating different student backgrounds and the challenges that can arise due to cultural differences. They underlined the role of language skills in facilitating effective communication and promoting inclusiveness in an internationalized context. Additionally, participants recognized the need for financial resources to support scholarships and create more opportunities for students to study abroad.

The research also shed light on the professional growth of the participants, many of whom recognized the positive impact of international experiences on their teaching methodologies and research projects. They highlighted the value of connecting with professors from different countries, attending international conferences and engaging in collaborative projects. Additionally, they have expressed a desire to contribute to the internationalization

efforts of their institutions, with some aspiring to work in the international office or take on managerial roles to further foster global engagement.

This research raises an important question for future investigations: how can universities effectively allocate resources and establish sustainable funding models to support the internationalization process? Exploring innovative approaches to securing financial support, such as building partnerships with organisations, alumni networks and government bodies, could provide insights into overcoming the financial hurdles associated with international initiatives. Furthermore, investigating the impact of international experiences on students' academic and personal development, as well as their subsequent career prospects, would further enhance our understanding of the long-term benefits of internationalisation.

In conclusion, this qualitative research underscores the importance of internationalization in higher education and the need for continued efforts to foster global connections, foster cross-cultural understanding, and create opportunities for students. By addressing the challenges and leveraging the benefits identified in this study, universities can further enhance their internationalization efforts and prepare students for success in an increasingly interconnected world. The question of sustainable funding and long-term impact on students presents a compelling avenue for future research, ensuring universities can continue to navigate and thrive in an ever-changing global landscape.

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