Positionings and challenges of Internationalization in a Higher Education Institution: perceptions of managers and coordinators

Josely Cristiane Rosa

Blumenau Regional University Foundation (FURB), Blumenau, SC, Brazil

jo.rosa@unifebe.edu.br

Marcia Regina Selpa Heinzle

Blumenau Regional University Foundation (FURB), Blumenau, SC, Brazil

selpa@furb.br

Abstract: This study dealt with the positioning of a higher education institution (HEI) in relation to the internationalization of education. Qualitative and exploratory-descriptive in nature, the research was conducted through a case study and documentary analysis. Significant challenges for the internationalization of education at the HEI were highlighted, such as the implementation of continuous programs and the creation of more global opportunities.

Keywords : Internationalization; Interculturality; Higher Education

Posicionamentos e desafios da Internacionalização em uma Instituição de Ensino Superior: percepções dos gestores e coordenadores

Resumo: Este estudo compreendeu o posicionamento de uma Instituição de Ensino Superior (IES) quanto à Internacionalização da educação. De natureza qualitativa e exploratório-descritiva, a pesquisa foi realizada por meio de um estudo de caso e análise documental. Foram evidenciados desafios significativos para Internacionalização da educação na IES, como a implementação de programas contínuos e a criação de mais oportunidades globais.

Palavras-chave: Internacionalização; Interculturalidade; Educação Superior

Posiciones y desafíos de la internacionalización en una institución de enseñanza superior: percepciones de directivos y coordinadores

Resumen: Este estudio analizó la posición de una institución de educación superior (IES) con respecto a la internacionalización de la educación. La investigación fue cualitativa y de carácter exploratorio-descriptivo, y se llevó a cabo mediante un estudio de caso y un análisis documental. Se destacaron retos significativos para la internacionalización de la educación en la IES, como la implementación de los programas en curso y la creación de más oportunidades globales.

Palabras clave: internacionalización, interculturalidad, educación superior.

1 INTRODUCTION

In addition to the recurring challenges facing HEIs, such as the quality of teaching, research, and extension, new challenges are challenging the traditional model of education and the neoliberal model of higher education. According to Morosini (2014), these challenges, which the author calls emerging contexts, ratify the role of higher education institutions (HEIs) as agencies for human and social development.

The current challenges in education motivate us to reflect on the positioning of university professors in the face of the contemporary characteristics of the global and interconnected world, going far beyond the teaching process in the classroom. In this regard, Canan and Santos (2019, p. 347, translated by us) consider that "the teaching task presupposes working on content in a direct and dynamic relationship with training for life, work, and citizenship".

The authors add that the guidelines/requirements established by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC) in the National Curricular Guidelines (DCN), which have a direct impact on the Course Pedagogical Project (PPC), direct the participation of teachers, in addition to teaching, to the practice of research and extension. These experiences-teaching, research, and extension-are imbued with the political and civic dimension of the teaching profession, which "must manifest itself in pedagogical action, through methodologies that lead students to think reflectively about their profession and their civic action in the world" (Canan; Santos, 2019, p. 353, translated by us).

By revisiting the past of education and analyzing the characteristics of present-day education, Tardif (2021) presents some directions regarding the future of education, namely: we have a rationalism that institutionalizes educational practices, a science of education increasingly based on empirical data connected to Neurology and Cognitive Psychology and a growing impact of new technologies on education. "Finally, the future of education cannot be separated from the future of our societies and this human civilization that has now become global" (Tardif, 2021, p. 84, translated by us).

New challenges in higher education must also be considered through innovative curricula that permeate the internationalization and interculturality of education. In this context,

the internationalization of higher education (HE) has been a central theme in different spaces and antagonistic perspectives. Among them are international organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank (Morosini; Ustárroz, 2016). These organizations have inserted higher education as a strategy for developing education in the context of globalization, as a productive force and market driver. From this perspective, education is seen as a marketable service to the detriment of its social and emancipatory role. On the other hand, the internationalization of higher education has taken the form of promoting global citizenship in favor of sustainable development and the individual and collective well-being of human beings (Morosini, 2019).

In this understanding, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognizes, from the perspective of sustainable development and global citizenship, the "[...] relevance of education for understanding and solving global problems in their social, political, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions" (UNESCO, 2015, p. 9, translated by us). Furthermore, for UNESCO, education is valued not only for its role in improving knowledge and cognitive skills but also as an essential means of establishing values, socio-emotional skills, and attitudes in students that are fundamental to promoting global cooperation and encouraging significant social change.

In this context, the reflective question that permeated the research was the following: what is the position of a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Itajaí Valley (SC) about the internationalization and interculturality of education? According to Morosini (2019), internationalization and interculturality in higher education are achieved through global collaborations that respect and value cultural diversity. These collaborations contribute to the improvement of the country's science and technology, while being linked to local needs, aiming at a development that is sustainable in the long term.

Thus, the general objective of the research was to understand the positioning of a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Itajai Valley (SC) about the internationalization and interculturality of education, considering the perception of managers and coordinators of undergraduate courses. To this end, the specific objectives outlined were: (i) to review the guiding documents of the HEI regarding the regulation of the internationalization of education; (ii) to analyze the internationalization strategies and actions of the HEI, and; (iii) to identify favorable factors and benefits for the internationalization of the HEI.

Thus, the theoretical framework adopted in this study is based on the concepts of

internationalization and interculturality in higher education. This theoretical understanding is relevant because it addresses the integration of international and intercultural dimensions in education, a central aspect of the investigation. By exploring how these dimensions are intertwined, the theory allows us to analyze in depth the practices and perceptions of managers and coordinators of undergraduate programs. In addition, it offers a framework for understanding how collaborative interactions and the appreciation of cultural diversity can strengthen the scientific and technological capacity of the institution, connecting it to the local context and promoting sustainable development.

This research is justified by two sets of considerations, one theoretical and the other practical. In the theoretical context, it is understood that several studies define the challenges of higher education. However, regarding the positioning of teachers or universities in explaining their position in facing such challenges, there has become a gap that needs to be filled. Therefore, to fill this gap, particularly in the positioning of managers and coordinators of undergraduate courses in HEIs, in the face of internationalization and interculturality, this research is justified in its theoretical nature. In a practical context, this research provides knowledge both for the development of educational guidelines and policies that guide the construction of management programs and strategies and for (re)thinking about the problems of the teaching profession in the 21st century.

2 THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION (HE)

Understanding the internationalization of higher education (HE) means understanding the globalization process as an inducer of new formats of HE, in which the social role of HE is prioritized in the formation of a citizen who can understand not only local needs but also international ones. In this regard, internationalization assumes the role of improving the quality of education, research, and services to the global society (De Wit; Altbach, 2021). Thus, according to Silva (2022), higher education institutions have the mission of educating qualified professionals and responsible citizens who promote sustainable development at all levels. Thus, higher education contributes to global economic and social progress and the construction of a more just and egalitarian society based on the formation of global citizens.

In addition to the territorial mobility of students and teachers, the internationalization of higher education refers to the collaboration between researchers, the promotion of cross-border

education, and global institutional policies (Stallivieri, 2002). For De Wit and Hunter (2015), the internationalization of higher education is conceived as a deliberate process of integrating the international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions in the objectives, functions, and implementation of higher education, whose guiding objective is to improve the quality of education and research and to make a significant contribution to society.

In this regard, Knight (2020) explains that the international dimension of the internationalization of higher education refers to the relations between nations, cultures, or countries. This dimension is also extended to understanding the relationship with the diversity of cultures within countries, communities, institutions, and classrooms. The intercultural dimension refers to aspects of cultural diversity. And, finally, the global dimension refers to the meaning of worldwide scope. It is noteworthy that these three dimensions complement each other, and when integrated, they broaden and deepen the internationalization process.

It is therefore understood that the internationalization of higher education is a process that involves the integration of international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions in education, research, and extension, aiming at the construction of global citizenship, expanding its process for sustainable development. Furthermore, it is mentioned that the process of internationalization of higher education includes several activities, such as (i) international mobility of students, professors and researchers; (ii) international academic cooperation, including partnerships for research and development of joint projects; (iii) inclusion of international content in curricula, research and extension - Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC); (iv) development of intercultural competencies in students and the academic community; (v) promotion of cultural diversity and inclusion in higher education; (vi) internationalization of the management and governance of higher education institutions; and (vii) internationalization at home - Internationalization at Home or IaH - which requires internationalization activities on campus, excluding mobility.

Knight (2020) emphasizes the importance of internationalization at home as a complementary strategy to international mobility, capable of promoting the education of globally competent students within the academic environment itself. According to the author, internationalization at home strategies include the "intercultural and international dimension in the teaching/learning process, research, co-curricular activities, relations with local cultural and ethnic groups in the community, and the integration of foreign students and faculty into campus life and activities" (Knight, 2020, p. 32, translated by us).

According to Beelen and Leask (2011, p. 5, translated by us), internationalization at home (IaH) aims to develop intercultural skills in all students in addition to international skills. For Deardorff (2020), intercultural skills are related to the improvement of human interactions through differences, whether within a given society (differences related to age, gender, religion, economic-social status, political preferences, ethnicity) or across borders.

The Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC), in turn, has emerged as a strategy (pedagogical approach to teaching and learning) that seeks to "provide all students, within the campus itself, with training to act in a globalized and multifaceted society with autonomy and awareness of their citizenship" (Marcelino et al., 2019, p. 592, translated by us). Leask (2015) adds that the internationalization of the curriculum is linked to institutional policies and practices, that is, in the pedagogical approach to teaching and learning of academics. However, Stallivieri (2016) states that both discussions and initiatives for the internationalization of the curriculum in Brazil are incipient and rare. There is a lack of "[...] institutional financial support for the training of those involved in the educational process and the institutionalization of the culture of internationalization as a focal point for the qualification of institutions (Lauxen; Marcelino, 2018, p. 4, translated by us).

Still in this aspect, Morosini and Corte (2018) highlight that, despite the Brazilian economic reality that makes it difficult to implement actions for the internationalization of higher education, one strategy to change this reality is to rethink internationalization based on the internationalization of the curriculum (IoC) and internationalization at home (IaH). "In view of this, internationalization becomes an instrument for the development of interculturality, which is a sine qua noncondition for an effective result when it comes to internationalization in higher education" (Clemente; Morosini, 2021, p. 100, authors' emphasis, translated by us).

In this scenario of possibilities, the institutional and teaching positioning is considered in the promotion of policies and actions for the internationalization of higher education, which affects the formation of citizens, economic development, innovation, global collaboration, and the dissemination of knowledge. According to Stallivieri (2017), in order to establish internationalization policies, it is essential to analyze the current situation of the institution, including the vision, mission, and Institutional Development Plan (IDP), in addition to the language of communication, the potential for scientific publications in international journals, the establishment and maintenance of international partnerships, academic mobility programs for teachers, students, and technical staff, among others.

It is also understood that there is a shared responsibility: on the one hand, there is the position of the teacher in assuming his/her position regarding the internationalization and interculturality of education, that is, his/her openness to the new challenges of higher education. On the other hand, there is the institutional responsibility to promote the means necessary for the development of a meaningful teaching practice.

3 METHODOLOGICAL OUTLINES OF THE RESEARCH

From a methodological point of view, the research presented a qualitative approach (Minayo, 2014), of an exploratory and descriptive nature (Beuren, 2004). It is noteworthy that qualitative research attributes fundamental importance to the discourse of the social actors involved and the meanings transmitted by them (Vieira; Zouain, 2005) since the main objective is "to try to understand what people learn when they perceive what happens in their worlds" (Zanelli, 2002, p. 83, translated by us). In terms of data collection procedures, the study was characterized as a case study and documentary (Gil, 2017).

The data were collected between April and May 2024, through a questionnaire that was applied to the coordinators of the undergraduate courses and the senior managers of the university. The questionnaire included closed and open-ended questions that allowed participants to express their opinions, experiences, and feelings in their own words. The Google Forms tool was used to administer the questionnaire and the link to the questionnaire was emailed to the participants. Out of a universe of 22 (twenty-two) coordinators, 15 (fifteen) agreed to participate in the research. In turn, out of 3 (three) senior managers, 02 (two) participated in the research. It is noteworthy that the research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Regional University of Blumenau - FURB, with opinion number 6.680.352, issued on March 1, 2024, and by the Research Ethics Committee of the co-participating HEI, with opinion number 6.717.507, issued on March 21, 2024.

Regarding the questionnaire applied to the course coordinators, it is worth mentioning that in addition to Table 1, included in the analysis of results, the coordinators were asked to answer the following question: What is your concept and position on the internationalization of higher education, considering the higher education institution to which you belong? Regarding the questionnaire applied to Pro-Rectors, the following questions were verified: (i) What is your

perception regarding the internationalization of higher education, considering the HEI you are part of? (ii) What is your perception regarding the challenges of internationalization of higher education, considering the HEI you are part of? (iii) What is your perception regarding the potential of internationalization of higher education, considering the HEI you are part of? (iv) What are the most important potential benefits of internationalization of education, considering the HEI you are part of? (v) What are the main external factors that drive the internationalization of higher education, considering the HEI you are part of? (vi) What are the internal and external obstacles the internationalization of higher education, considering the HEI you are part of?

Content analysis (Bardin, 2016), a set of communication analysis techniques, was used to analyze the perceptions of undergraduate course managers and coordinators about the internationalization and interculturality of education. These techniques follow systematic and objective procedures to describe the content of messages, allowing us to infer knowledge about the conditions of production and reception of these messages. Content analysis is particularly useful for identifying patterns and recurring themes in participants' speech, providing a deep understanding of the underlying meanings. In addition, this approach allows for a broad interpretation linked to the theoretical framework, facilitating the construction of relevant insights about the practices and perceptions of managers and coordinators in relation to internationalization and interculturality.

4 ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

First, the research analyzed the documents that guide the internationalization of the university. It was noted that the Regulation of the Institutional Policy for Internationalization and Exchange of the HEI was approved by the resolution of the University Council in 2023. In Article 4, the regulation defines the principles of the institutional policy for the internationalization and exchange of academics, professors, and technical-administrative staff.

In general, the principles of the institutional policy of internationalization of the University include (i) the promotion and exchange of experiences and knowledge among the stakeholders; (ii) the possibility of technical, scientific and cultural exchanges; (iii) the development of activities, programs, projects and research of institutional interest; (iv) courses, events, internships, among others, at the international level; (v) the knowledge of new national

or foreign realities, as well as the improvement of studies in another language.

In its Institutional Policy for Internationalization and Exchange, the access of participants (academics, professors, and technical-administrative staff) to national or foreign universities or schools specialized in language studies, to technical, secondary, or higher-level study and research centers, and similar or related institutions will preferably be made through a specific agreement signed between the University and the host institution.

It is worth mentioning that the IES has an Internationalization Committee made up of members representing the Pro-Rectorates, as well as student, faculty, technical-administrative and undergraduate course coordinators. The HEIs also offer permanent extension programs such as language courses abroad, long-term academic exchanges, and international study and technical visits.

To analyze the internationalization strategies and actions of the HEI, the research identified the activities carried out by the undergraduate courses, considering the perception of the course coordinators, as shown in Chart 1 below:

Chart 1 – HEI internationalization strategies and actions

INDICATORS	DESCRIPTION	QTY.
Mobility Geographical	scientific academic mobility of students.	10
	scientific academic mobility of teachers.	02
Curriculum and Programs or Courses	actions (projects, programs, events, etc.) with international themes.	10
	insertion of the international, cultural, global or comparative dimension in extension courses or existing disciplines.	04
	studies (research) of regional and/or national areas.	08
	request for international references in the Teaching Plan	05
Teaching Process/ Apprenticeship	active involvement of overseas students, students returning from studies abroad and cultural diversity of the classroom in the teaching/learning process.	05
	virtual student mobility for joint disciplines and research projects.	05
	greater use of social media.	04
	use of researchers and teachers from abroad and local international/intercultural experts.	06
	integration of international, intercultural case studies.	04
	service learning.	02
	integration of international, intercultural and global learning outcomes and assessments.	02
Research Activity	network-based research and innovation projects.	02
	international conferences and seminars.	08
	articles and texts published together	05
	international research agreements.	02
	research exchange programs.	04
	foreign research partners in academic and other sectors.	01
	integration of visiting researchers in academic activities on campus.	03
Co-curricular Activities	international/global leadership development programs.	01
	interdisciplinary seminars and *think tanks*	04
	seminars with renowned speakers.	07
Extracurricular Activities	student clubs and associations.	01
	international and intercultural events on campus.	04
	language partners, friendship programs, student speaker programs.	02
	link with cultural and ethnic group located in the community.	03
	peer support groups and programs.	08
Links with Cultural/Ethnic Groups located in the community	student involvement in cultural and ethnic organizations through internships, volunteer work, training, and applied research.	06
	involvement of representatives of local cultural and ethnic groups in teaching/learning activities, research and extracurricular events and projects.	05

Source: Indicators and description based on Knigth (2020).

In terms of geographic mobility, in the perception of the course coordinators, the scientific academic mobility of students predominated as an internationalization action. It is considered that the geographical mobility of students is one of the strategies of the internationalization process of higher education since it offers students the opportunity to

diversify their educational, cultural, and personal experiences. It is worth noting that this action enables the development of academic and professional skills, including access to high-quality educational resources, collaborative research opportunities, global networking, and improved employability. According to Santos (2006), international academic mobility accompanies the globalization process as it accelerates flows and brings places closer together.

In terms of curriculum and programs or courses, the internationalization actions highlighted by the coordinators were (i) projects (programs and/or events) with international themes, (ii) studies (research) of regional and/or national areas, and (iii) international references in the curriculum. In this regard, it should be noted that when an undergraduate program develops an internationalized curriculum, the actions developed often have a global focus, addressing issues and challenges that transcend national and cultural borders. Consequently, such curricula and/or programs or courses aim to develop global competencies in students, including intercultural skills, intercultural communication, critical thinking, complex problem-solving, and collaboration in global contexts.

It is understood that the Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC) emerges as a strategy (pedagogical approach to teaching and learning) "that aims to provide all students, within the campus itself, with the training to act in a globalized and multifaceted society with autonomy and awareness of their citizenship" (Marcelino et al., 2019, p. 592, translated by us). In this sense, it is observed that the internationalization of the curriculum emerges as an alternative to developing the internationalization of higher education in a way that is accessible to all. According to Silva (2022, p. 56, translated by us), "the internationalization of the curriculum also becomes a matter of equity, as well as a necessity in the Brazilian context, in which the minority of students have the opportunity to carry out exchanges, virtual mobility or have educational experiences outside the country".

Concerning the teaching/learning process, (i) the use of researchers and teachers from abroad and local international/intercultural experts, as well as (ii) the active involvement of students from abroad and cultural diversity in the classroom, and (iii) the virtual mobility of students for joint courses and research projects were the most highlighted internationalization measures. When it comes to the teaching-learning process in the context of internationalization, educational technologies play a crucial role in facilitating communication and collaboration between students and teachers in different parts of the world. This includes the use of online learning platforms, virtual classrooms, and synchronous and asynchronous communication

tools, among others.

According to Machado, Dos Santos, and Costa (2020), it is understood that the (geographical) mobility of students and teachers is not a possibility that is within everyone's reach, given the economic reality of Brazilian educational institutions, which are unable to accommodate all interested parties. In this sense, it is considered that "it is essential to adopt alternatives so that internationalization can develop within our country, that is, "at home", providing students with opportunities to develop the intercultural skills they need" (Machado; Dos Santos; Costa, 2020, p. 703, translated by us).

One of the alternatives is the use of educational technologies. For Santos (2020, p. 219, translated by us), "digital technologies allow the internationalization of higher education at home or even the internationalization of the curriculum". "Therefore, in different places (at home, in the classroom, in the library...), digital technologies can value group work and develop communication, interaction, reflection, and critical thinking - skills advocated by Global Citizenship Education (GCE)" (Machado; Dos Santos; Costa, 2020, p. 706, translated by us).

Regarding Research Activities, the actions contemplated by the HEI internationalization process were international conferences and seminars, as well as jointly published articles and texts. In addition to international collaboration, research activities in the internationalization of education foster a diversity of perspectives, approaches, and methodologies, enriching the quality and relevance of the research carried out. This can lead to a more comprehensive and holistic understanding of the problems under study.

It is understood that research activities with a bias towards the internationalization of higher education are confirmed as a sign of a new phase of "truly borderless education" (Unesco, 2003, p. 137, translated by us). "Thus, the main challenge today is to ensure that the resulting global space for higher education and research preserves diversity, rejects uniformity, and serves as a truly global common good" (Unesco, 2003, p. 138, translated by us).

The predominant co-curricular activities were seminars with renowned speakers. It is worth noting that guest speakers are usually icons in their fields and can share insights, recent research, and best practices in their areas of expertise, ensuring that students are at the forefront of knowledge in their areas of interest.

In terms of co-curricular activities, peer support groups and programs were the most frequently cited internationalization activities implemented by undergraduate programs. This

action includes the guidance and welcome of international students as soon as they arrive at the institution, including practical issues such as enrollment procedures, housing, health services, and cultural integration. It is worth noting that in addition to academic support, social and emotional support is also relevant to the transition and integration of international students into their studies and university life.

In terms of links with cultural/ethnic groups in the community, the involvement of students in cultural/ethnic organizations through internships, volunteering, training, and applied research was predominant. It is believed that in addition to promoting cultural and linguistic exchange, such activities and the establishment of links with cultural and ethnic groups promote intercultural dialogue and awareness of issues of diversity and inclusion. This can help build bridges between different groups and promote a culture of mutual respect and understanding.

The research then investigated the course coordinators' conception of the internationalization of higher education in the HEI to which they belong. In general, the coordinators' conception of the internationalization of higher education is that there are many challenges to be overcome by the HEI, both in implementing ongoing programs and/or projects - establishing itself as an institution that engages with the world through ongoing actions as part of the objective mission of education - and in creating opportunities for students, professors, and researchers to engage in educational, collaborative and research experiences on a global scale.

Another factor observed by the coordinators was that in addition to the low attractiveness for students and teachers in terms of dissemination of projects and partnerships with other higher education institutions, there is also a low level of preparation for the global job market concerning the internationalization of education, such as: teaching a foreign language, financial incentives for teachers and institutional student exchange programs.

About these aspects, the authors Knight and De Wit (2007) consider that raising the awareness of the academic community about the internationalization of education should be the first step to be considered when defining policies for internationalization in higher education institutions. This situation requires the commitment and involvement of governments (local, state, federal), university administrators, students, faculty, and staff in all areas of the university for internationalization to be successful.

In turn, Stallivieri (2009) adds that, in addition to a phase of defining policies and planning strategies and actions for

internalization, it is necessary to carry out an internal diagnosis of the university so that the institution knows its current international position (actions, programs, and projects), as well as recognizing its potential to offer and receive for acting in mutual cooperation.

Regarding the preparation for the global market, "there is an expectation that universities will become key players in the global knowledge economy, and internationalization is identified as a key response to globalization" (De Wit; Hunter, 2014, p. 5, translated by us). In this sense, given the financial challenges faced by students and faculty, it is important to think about alternatives to internationalization beyond geographic mobility as the dominant component of internationalization policies worldwide, that is, to develop actions and strategies such as internationalization at home (IaH) and internationalization of the curriculum (IoC) (De Wit; Altbach, 2021).

The research also sought to understand the position of senior management on the internationalization of education in the higher education institutions to which they belong. The responses showed a gradual process of maturation and evolution of internationalization policies in the HEI, as well as the strengthening of various actions to internationalize the institution. According to the authors Neves and Barbosa (2020), the mobility of professors and students has always been part of the internationalization actions of universities. "However, as a result of social and economic transformations in the process of globalization and the constitution of the knowledge society, higher education institutions (HEIs) have been challenged to assume new roles, priorities and strategies" (Neves; Barbosa, 2020, p. 145, translated by us). In this sense, the internationalization of higher education is a response to the consequences of a globalized world, as well as a result of the so-called knowledge society (Bernheim, 2018).

Regarding the challenges, the managers highlighted that, for both students and faculty, the lack of a second language (mainly English) hinders academic mobility. In this regard, Neves and Barbosa (2020) explain that in Brazil, the internationalization policies of Brazilian universities (definition of institutional strategies) are recent and there are many obstacles to overcome, among which the language barrier. Oliveira and Freitas (2017) state that the lack of knowledge of other languages is one of the main challenges in the experience of international mobility, which is perceived as an obstacle by Brazilian students and researchers abroad, causing academic difficulties. It is worth noting that,

The Education First English Proficiency Index (2022) shows that Brazil ranks 58th out of a total of 111 countries, and is considered to have moderate proficiency. In Latin America, Brazil ranks 12th out of 20 countries in the region." (Fleury; Heredia, 2022, p. 3, translated by us).

Regarding the potential for internationalization of higher education in universities, the managers stated that they are consolidating academic mobility, mainly in Portugal. However, actions are planned to promote the use of the English language by offering courses in English. This initiative should promote internationalization, as it will also allow the reception of students and professors from other countries, as well as the development of research through partnerships. Once again, the use of English as the global language of science, in addition to the transmission and exchange of ideas, has become an instrument for the inclusion of the internationalization of higher education (Fleury; Heredia, 2022).

It is understood that promoting actions to practice the English language will train students capable of interacting with the globalized world, considering that for quality integration to occur, whether through scientific, technological, and/or social knowledge, it is necessary to insert students in a favorable linguistic context (Coelho, 2021).

The managers added that, in general, the internationalization potential of the university is relevant, considering the good institutional and personal relations, especially with the European countries from which the people who colonized the region where the university is located emigrated.

Regarding the most relevant benefits of internationalization of education for HEIs, managers highlighted the opportunity to practice a second language; learn about and interact with other cultures; collaborate in research; prepare for and access the global job market; attract foreign students; to provide opportunities for academics and teachers to gain experience and qualifications abroad; to create and strengthen relationships between countries, especially in the world of work, culture and interpersonal relationships.

The benefits highlighted by the managers are in line with the publication "Education for Global Citizenship (ECG): Preparing Students for the Challenges of the 21st Century", published by UNESCO in 2015. This publication highlights the concept of global citizenship, considering that humanity, in terms of belonging, transcends local, national, and transnational spaces. Global citizens become active contributors to the development of a more just, peaceful,

tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable world (Unesco, 2015).

Regarding the main external factors that drive the internationalization of higher education in higher education institutions, managers also mentioned the globalization of the economy, as companies are increasingly looking for professionals better prepared for this world, and the competition among higher education institutions. In this sense, internationalization is becoming a differentiating factor between universities. The managers also highlighted the relationships already established with other entities, governments, and HEIs that have common interests in terms of development, education, and research.

Regarding the main obstacles to promoting the internationalization of teaching in HEIs, the following were identified as internal obstacles: the lack of a consolidated institutional culture for internationalization; the mismatch of the academic calendar with foreign HEIs; the adaptation of curricula to make them more attractive from an international (global) point of view. In this regard, it is worth highlighting that Heinzle and Pereira (2023, p. 16, translated by us), in their analyses of the internationalization policies and Institutional Development Plans (IDPs) of nine founding universities in Santa Catarina, found that the institutional documents "contemplate activities of an international, intercultural or global dimension, even if in a singular and incipient way, since some actions do not yet seem to be consolidated and integrated with the functions of teaching, research and extension".

This fact, as reported by the managers, can be explained by the absence of a consolidated institutional culture of internationalization. In this sense, it is understood that internationalization requires a holistic approach that involves all aspects of the institution and is aligned with the general objectives of the academic community. This can lead to the creation of a more robust institutional culture that supports and promotes effective international activities.

External obstacles include exchange rates and language barriers, both for sending and receiving students and professors; finding partners with common interests, that is, those interested in promoting and consolidating the internationalization of higher education with the university. Neves and Barbosa (2020, p. 171, translated by us) explain that "there is, therefore, a long way to go for Brazilian universities to internationalize at the national level and to proactively insert themselves in the global scenario". Success will depend not only on the coordination of public policies but also on an appropriate institutional disposition in the definition of priorities.

Carvalho and Araújo (2020) understand that, although there are significant barriers to the implementation and management of internationalization by higher education institutions, there are ongoing efforts to improve results, promote internationalization, and provide opportunities for advancement and growth in global citizenship. It is understood that these efforts include the implementation of policies and strategies that promote internationalization, such as the creation of academic mobility programs, international partnerships, and the integration of intercultural dimensions into the curriculum. In addition, higher education institutions are investing in digital technologies to facilitate global collaboration and distance learning, thereby expanding opportunities for international exchange and collaboration. These efforts not only improve academic outcomes but also promote the development and growth of global citizenship, preparing students to be agents of change in an increasingly interconnected world.

4 CONSIDERATIONS

It is understood that the internationalization of higher education reflects the economic, political, social, and human conditions outlined by the globalization process, which today (re)designs a global educational market based on multiculturalism and interculturality. Immersed in this context, there is a recent movement of Brazilian universities to define strategies and actions that insert their activities into the prism of the internationalization of higher education.

In this context, the research sought to understand the positioning of a Higher Education Institution (HEI) in the Itajaí Valley (SC) in relation to the internationalization and interculturality of education, considering the perception of managers and coordinators of undergraduate courses.

First, the guiding documents of the HEI regarding the regulation of the internationalization of education were reviewed. The research observed the principles that guide the HEI's Institutional Policy Regulations for Internationalization and Exchange, as well as the guidelines that regulate the access of participants (academics, professors, and staff). The analysis of the university's guiding documents revealed the importance of valuing and integrating different cultures in the academic environment, as well as the fact that contact with new national or foreign realities can broaden participants' horizons and promote greater

understanding and respect for different cultures and ways of life. These documents seek to develop a more innovative and creative academic environment, driven by cultural diversity and the exchange of knowledge. In this context, it was noted that there is a regulatory effort by the University to train competent and responsible professionals who act consciously in society. Professionals who promote sustainable development at local, regional, and global levels.

Following this line of reasoning, in the comprehensive analysis of the internationalization strategies and actions of the HEI, several actions carried out by the undergraduate courses were mentioned. However, the same course coordinators highlighted that there are many challenges to be overcome by the HEI, mainly in the implementation of ongoing programs and/or projects that allow the institution to be permanently engaged in the global scenario and to create more opportunities for students, professors, and researchers to participate in educational and collaborative experiences at a global level. The coordinators also pointed out that the institution faces challenges in attracting students and professors, mainly due to insufficient promotion of its projects and partnerships with other institutions. In addition, they noted that preparation for the global job market is inadequate, as evidenced by the lack of foreign language instruction, the absence of financial incentives for professors, and the lack of robust institutional student exchange programs. In this regard, it is understood that if higher education institutions do not train global professionals (one of the goals of internationalization), their graduates may not be prepared to work in a globalized labor market. In other words, the lack of global education can limit the academic and professional development of students, negatively impacting their ability to innovate and contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable society. In addition, a lack of intercultural skills and language proficiency can limit opportunities for international collaboration and partnerships, isolating institutions from the global academic scene.

In identifying the factors and benefits favorable to internationalization, the managers highlighted significant potential for the internationalization of the university. However, they mentioned the lack of a consolidated institutional culture for internationalization. In this context, it is understood that there is an arduous journey for the HEI. First, a deep understanding of the institutional community (faculty, students, and staff) about what internationalization is and what its real objectives are. This involves promoting a culture of internationalization that permeates all academic and administrative activities and encourages the active participation of all members of the academic community. In addition, it is necessary to develop effective communication strategies to publicize the

benefits and opportunities of internationalization, as well as to create training and qualification programs that prepare members of the community to act in a global context. The implementation of incentive policies, such as financial support for academic mobility and international partnerships, is also essential to consolidate this culture.

The journey towards internationalization requires a continuous and collaborative commitment in which all sectors of the institution work together to integrate the international dimension into their daily practices. Only in this way will the university be able to reap the full benefits of internationalization, strengthen its position in the global academic scenario, and contribute to the formation of global citizens prepared to face the challenges of today's world.

It is also important to emphasize the understanding that the internationalization of education is not only geographical (academic mobility) but above all a process that begins at the institution itself ("at home"), with the insertion of intercultural and international dimensions integrated into the teaching and learning process. This means that internationalization must be integrated into the curriculum, teaching methods, and daily academic activities. Each discipline can incorporate global and intercultural perspectives, preparing students to think critically about international issues and to act in a global context. Teaching methods can be adapted to include collaborative and interactive approaches that promote the exchange of knowledge between different cultures. It is also important to provide an academic environment that values and celebrates cultural diversity. This can be done through cultural events, lectures, workshops, and other activities that promote respect and mutual understanding. Fostering an inclusive environment where all cultures are respected and valued helps to build a more cohesive and collaborative academic community. By integrating intercultural and international dimensions into the daily activities of the institution, IES will produce more well-rounded professionals capable of acting with competence and sensitivity anywhere in the world.

This study offers significant contributions to the understanding and improvement of internationalization in higher education, highlighting the importance of a consolidated institutional culture for internationalization and showing that the mere existence of programs and partnerships is not enough without the commitment and understanding of the entire academic community. Furthermore, the study provides a solid basis for the development of strategies that can overcome the barriers to the implementation of internationalization. Another important contribution is the emphasis on internationalization "at home", which includes the integration of intercultural and international dimensions into the curriculum and daily academic

activities. This reinforces the idea that internationalization is not limited to academic mobility, but should be an integral part of the educational process. These contributions can serve as a guide for other higher education institutions seeking to enhance their internationalization strategies and promote a more inclusive, diverse, and globally connected education.

Finally, it is believed that through this comprehensive analysis, it is possible to promote continued study and future research on the topic as strategies for strengthening the Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC) and Internationalization at Home (IaH). The role of digital technologies in the internationalization of higher education is also mentioned, i.e. how online learning platforms, artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, and social networks are changing the internationalization of higher education. Research can address how these technologies facilitate international collaboration, virtual mobility, the inclusion of intercultural dimensions in the curriculum, and the creation of global learning experiences without the need for physical travel.

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