



# Brazilian and Foreign Education (A brief history of internationalization of studies in Brazil)

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**Abstract:** In this study, we propose a brief history of the internationalization of studies in Brazil, from colonial times to the present, and we try to glimpse the reasons for this phenomenon. By doing so, we show how the study abroad period is a deeply entrenched cultural practice among Brazilians and that can only be understood if we take into account the place traditionally occupied by foreigners in the reproduction process of local elites. During the development of doctoral research, we analyzed the trajectory of eight Brazilian students who are studying or have studied in France. This study allows us to glimpse at how the phenomenon of internationalization of studies, discussed in this text, from its macro-social perspective, is experienced on an individual scale. Certain stories also reveal that Brazilians traveling to study abroad are generally attracted to a valuable education and experience in Brazil, in the educational, professional and social markets, which does not necessarily mean better quality. Immersed in the process of dismissing diplomas, as a result of another process, namely the "democratization" of access to schools, they believe that staying ensures them a social distinction that can be mobilized in the search for good jobs and in the conquest of prestige, guaranteeing they belong to a class or even allowing them to climb a new social strata. It makes sense, because, in the suburbs, elite reproduction traditionally takes place overseas.

**Keywords:** Internationalization of Studies; Social Reproduction; Brazil.

## 1. Introduction

The periods of study abroad mark the trajectories of members of the Brazilian elites, since the colonial period [1]. There was a time when it was impossible to attend an undergraduate, master's or doctoral degree in Brazil, given the lack of universities or postgraduate programs in the country, added, obviously, to the distinction guaranteed by the international experience, which gave rise to the displacements [2,3]. And when we started to count on centers of higher education and research of excellence, the phenomenon, which continued to function as a mark of social distinction, gained new contours, not only with regard to the considerable increase in the number of study trips and its extension to new groups (in this case, to the most privileged strata of the middle classes), but also to the expansion of possible modalities, which includes, for example, second-degree cultural exchanges and short-term linguistic internships. In this article, we seek to build a brief history of the internationalization of studies in Brazil, in addition to revealing the foundations of support for this phenomenon.

Brazil, throughout almost the entire colonial period (1500-1822) [4,5,6], was an exception in Latin America [7,8]. While Spain spread universities throughout its colonies, to the point where they had almost thirty at the time of independence, Portugal limited us to European universities, in particular Coimbra and Évora, the only ones existing in the metropolis at the time [9,10]. And the numerous failed attempts to start teaching higher education courses in Jesuit colleges denounce the intentionality of this limitation. In fact, it would be one of the strong bonds that sustained the colony's dependence, insofar as it guaranteed the conformation of the Brazilian elite in the molds that best suited the colonizer. With the arrival of the Portuguese court to Brazil, in 1808, some higher education courses and even some higher education institutions were created. In Rio de Janeiro, in 1808, the Academia de Marinha and the Course of Anatomy and Surgery were created; in 1810, the Royal Military Academy; in 1812, the Laboratory of Chemistry; in 1813, the Academy of Medicine and Surgery; and, in 1814, the Agriculture Course. In Bahia, in 1808, the Chair of Economics and the Surgery, Anatomy and Obstetrics Course were created; in 1812, the Agriculture Course; and, in 1817, the Chemistry Course and the Technical Drawing Course. In addition, in 1809, in Pernambuco, the Mathematics Course was created; in 1817, in the former Vila Rica, now Ouro Preto, the Drawing and History Course; and, in 1821, in Paracatu, a city in the interior of Minas Gerais, the Course of Rhetoric and Philosophy. What justified the emergence of these courses and institutions was a pressing demand. Having become the seat of the Portuguese empire, Brazil needed to have a certain infrastructure that would guarantee the life of the court. Military defense also became an important issue. And it was necessary to fill the gaps in the teaching given in royal classes. There were few initiatives regarding higher education during the Empire

(1822-1889), with successive governments almost restricted to maintaining the works of Dom João VI. In 1826, the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts began to operate in Rio de Janeiro, founded by a French mission, which Jean-Baptiste Debret was a part of. A year later, legal courses were opened in São Paulo and Olinda. The Engineering Course was separated from the Military Academy in 1874, giving rise to the Polytechnic School. Finally, in 1875, the Ouro Preto School of Mines was installed, a project by the French engineer Claude-Henri Gorceix. It was only in the first half of the last century that the country had four universities. In 1920, the University of Rio de Janeiro was created, from the aggregation of three isolated faculties. In 1927, the University of Minas Gerais was created, also constituted in the same way. The University of São Paulo (USP), the first Brazilian higher education institution to go beyond the limits and ambitions of professional training, was founded in 1934, with a strong presence of a French mission, which Claude Lévi-Strauss was a part of. A year later, also with a new spirit, we had the emergence of the Universidade do Distrito Federal, which would be absorbed, in 1937, by the University of Brazil (UnB), the latter of a more conservative nature.

In an attempt to establish historical landmarks in tune with the development of relations between Brazilian and international higher education, mentions, in principle, two periods. They are: 1. 1500-1840, when university education was carried out entirely or mostly in Portugal; 2. 1840-1930, when it gradually started to be carried out in Brazil, and with regard to the circulation of Brazilian students abroad, the metropolis progressively lost its hegemony over other European centers. An indication of this transformation is the place of study of the ministers of the time. All of them had studied in Coimbra until the end of the First Reign (1822-1831). At the beginning of the Second Reign (1840-1889), they were divided into two almost equivalent groups, those who passed through Portugal (45%) and those who came from Brazilian institutions (55%). As of 1853, none of them had Portuguese baggage. And as for the diversification of destinations abroad, between 1831 and 1889, five ministers (8%) attended universities in other countries, probably in France.

## 2. New Phenomenon

The constructed history allows us to understand how the periods of study abroad constitute cultural practices that are deeply rooted among us. Until 1808, those who were not destined for the priesthood had to leave Brazil to enter higher education. Although the arrival of the Portuguese court (1808) led to the emergence of some higher education courses and even some higher education institutions, courses and institutions that survived the proclamation of independence (1822) and to which they were added throughout the Empire (1822-1889), some novelties in terms of higher education, the University of Coimbra continued to function as a “Brazilian university”, in the words of Anísio Teixeira, until the second half of the 19th century. This picture began to change only in the middle of the last century, certainly more significantly after 1920, with the creation of the first universities in Brazil. But this with regard to undergraduate courses, as we would have to wait until the second half of the 20th century to witness the consolidation of our graduate programs. Since they were created, to a large extent, by researchers who developed their master's and doctoral degrees abroad, according to American molds.

In fact, as Brito (1996) insists, the emergence of universities and even of master's and doctoral programs in Brazil did not mean the end of foreign participation in the higher education of Brazilians, but rather a complexification of the training itineraries of the elites [12]. The possibility of taking a degree in the country, at first, will only transfer this contribution from central countries to another level of education. Later, with the organization of our postgraduate system, he would be shifted again from training to research. In addition, having a national degree does not preclude study seasons abroad. Possessing it, on the contrary, will rather require this complementation, between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, for example, insofar as it guaranteed technical or scientific improvement and, above all, contact with the currents of ideas and international elites.

Within this process of complexification of the school trajectories of members of the most privileged strata of Brazilian society, which includes studying abroad, there are, in our opinion, also high school cultural exchanges and university exchanges for undergraduate students, as well as such as short-term language courses and internship or work abroad programmes. This is because these recent modalities of internationalization of studies, aimed at an increasingly younger clientele, seem to design not a new phenomenon but the new contours of a process of social reproduction that has accompanied us since the colonial period. Was dedicated to the analysis of the international schooling experiences of children of university professors and entrepreneurs in Belo Horizonte. For the author, it is a new facet of our educational reality, which cannot be ignored when talking about elite education, due to its vertiginous increase in recent decades among young people from favored social backgrounds. Around 60,000 students traveled abroad from Brazil to study in 2007, 10% of them attending high school and participating in a cultural exchange.

## 3. Unveiling the Internationalization of Studies

And what moves parents who invest in “a dose of Europe or the United States for each child”, in the words of an interviewee from Nogueira (1998, p.118) who gave the title to his article? The internationalization of studies, no matter what level of education, works as an educational strategy for certain groups, aiming to maintain the boundaries established between them and the groups with less cultural and economic capital, according to the author, who takes up the ideas

defended. by Bourdieu (2001). With the “democratization” of access to education, the academic success of people belonging to the lowest social strata and the increase in the number of graduates in the labor market, there is a devaluation of titles, due to their trivialization. Thus, those who previously distinguished themselves from the others by their possession saw the position they occupied threatened, and were led to quickly reformulate their school strategies and try to guarantee exclusivity over them, turning to higher levels of education, more selective or rarer types of schooling, as is the case of studies abroad [13].

Parents who finance a cultural exchange are no exception to the rule. They aim to super-prepare their children to succeed in the school market and in the job market. It is not by chance that the vast majority of high school students who leave abroad head to one of the central English-speaking countries<sup>5</sup>. As it is the most profitable language in a number of markets, it is considered a mandatory minimum knowledge by the families of exchange students. And the latter, believing in the superiority of learning a language in a country that has it as an official language, are not content to pay for free courses, which they also do, and very early on.

In fact, young people who leave to live for six months or a year in the United States, England, Canada, Australia, New Zealand or Ireland, once back in Brazil, convert their international experience into educational and professional advantages. : they get even better results in English at school; they achieve an excellent score in the foreign language test of the vestibular, which, by the way, is mandatory in federal universities, regardless of the higher course for which they apply; when they are in college, they are good at reading books and articles published in English; they may later apply for jobs that require fluency in English; in an interview for a job, they have the trump card of having a good command of the language, etc.

In addition to this utilitarian perspective, the study period outside Brazil has another, more subjective dimension, which is to guarantee children a cultural education and an opening of horizons and spirit. In other words, the trip itself, the contact with other cultures and, more than that, the experience in a central country, assume a formative character. These other objectives encourage an expansion of the cultural capital of young people, which is not only reflected in the school, although often not immediately or visibly, but has a social profitability and can also unfold in economic terms.

The high school exchange, then, establishes cleavages between those who learned a foreign language, especially English, in a country where the population speaks that language, and those who learned the same language in Brazil; between those who master a cultural *savoir faire* and those who do not. We could also add two other marks of social distinction, a first that divides those who have school trajectories marked by internationalization and those who do not, and a second between those who have lived in central countries and those who have not had this experience, which , undoubtedly, carries a positive meaning in a peripheral country like Brazil, where studying and living abroad is still very uncommon, and a very special relationship is established with the center of the world (Nogueira, 1998; 2008).

Brito (1991), in his doctoral thesis, when trying to understand the reasons that lead Brazilians to seek a postgraduate degree in France, is in line with what Nogueira (1998; 2008) says. According to the author, also for these Brazilians, the period of study abroad serves as a mark of distinction with a non-negligible value in the job market. If, until the 1970s, graduation guaranteed Brazilians access to most of the most valued jobs, including that of university professor, with the increase in the population's level of qualification caused by the University Reform of 1968 and the parallel emergence of a system of As early as the 1980s, postgraduate education was imposed as a necessary title for those who want to stand out among the mass of graduates fighting for a good post or working in a particular establishment. In other words, master's and doctoral degrees, especially when obtained at a renowned institution abroad, at least until very recently, were able to shield those who had them in a selective process and confer a privileged status on those who had already won a place in the sun.

In relation to Brazilian students who, in principle, do not attribute any value to the foreign degree, considering that they are civil servants and do not work or intend to work at the university, a minority among the interviewees, makes a point of emphasizing that, in this case, the prestige that the period of study abroad guarantees them is linked rather to the fact of living in France itself than to a title valued in the market. A reading of the formation of international elites elaborated by Wagner (2002) , taking as a starting point the reality of international schools - which Nogueira (2008) very perspicaciously defined as a kind of *in loco* internationalization, since it allows access to bilingual training, an international curriculum and diploma without requiring the displacement geographic – helps us to understand this hierarchy between studies carried out in Brazil and studies carried out in certain countries of the world or between a a Brazilian diploma and a certain foreign diploma, which permeates the entire discussion presented so far.

If the educational system is one of the centers, *par excellence*, for the production and reproduction of the national, the international schools, which deal with the training of the children of high officials and businessmen working abroad, would point, in principle, in the direction of the construction of the transnational, as they mix students of different nationalities, marked by a new culture linked to the globalization of exchanges and aspiring to an international diploma awarded by a Geneva foundation, the *Baccalaureat International*. However, when conducting a survey with international schools in the Paris region, Wagner concluded that, for expatriate families, overcoming the national only characterizes the sphere of work, and the educational sphere remains, in a very peculiar way, to it. submitted.

According to the author, the advantage of international school students lies in the accumulation of linguistic and cultural skills from several countries rather than in the denial of references and knowledge of a country. Thus, on the one hand, international culture cannot be defined as a more or less unified world culture, which replaces national cultures. It

is, on the contrary, the result of the sum of national cultures. It is a harmonious sum, that is to say, as we opt for the consensual dimensions of identities. On the other hand, the student and his family emerge as representatives of their country, and the richness of school education depends on their roots in their origins. International education, then, maintains a relationship with the national, which is marked, at the same time, by distance and appropriation. And, for international students, the national does not constitute a principle of exclusive identification, functioning as a linguistic, cultural and social resource, which they must learn to mobilize internationally.

#### 4. Final considerations

During the development of doctoral research, we analyzed the trajectories of eight Brazilian students who studied or had studied in France. This study allowed us to glimpse how the phenomenon of internationalization of studies, discussed in this text, from its macro-social perspective, is experienced on an individual scale. The particular stories also revealed that Brazilians who travel to study abroad are generally interested in a valued education and experience in Brazil, in the educational, professional and social markets, which does not necessarily mean better quality. Immersed in a process of trivialization of diplomas, as a result of another process, that of the “democratization” of access to school, they believe that the stay guarantees them a social distinction that can be mobilized in the search for a good job and in the conquest of prestige, guaranteeing them a class belonging or even allowing them to climb new social strata. Which makes sense, because, in a peripheral country, the reproduction of elites traditionally takes place abroad.

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