

## Higher education internationalization in Brazil: enrollments of foreign students in undergraduate programs in 2022

*Internacionalização da educação superior no Brasil:  
presença de estudantes estrangeiros matriculados em curso de graduação em 2022*

*Internacionalización de la educación superior en Brasil:  
presencia de estudiantes extranjeros matriculados en cursos de pregrado en 2022*

José Vieira de Sousa<sup>1</sup>  
Universidade de Brasília

Edson Machado de Sousa Filho<sup>2</sup>  
Universidade de Brasília

**Abstract:** The study analyzes data from the 2022 Brazilian Higher Education Census regarding the presence of foreign undergraduate students and their countries of origin, discussing the internationalization of higher education institutions in the country. Data collected by the Enade 2021 Student Questionnaire are also analyzed to discuss the extent to which the internationalization initiatives of Brazilian HEIs are measured in the assessment policy of the National Higher Education Assessment System (Sinaes). Finally, we discuss how internationalization is understood in the external institutional assessment instrument, the main form of quality promotion in the Brazilian system today. It concludes that there is a low presence of foreign students graduating in Brazil, little articulation between what is measured in the census and what is expected as quality in external evaluation, and the inexistence of official statistics regarding undergraduate student mobility abroad.

**Keywords:** Higher education; Internationalization of education; Student mobility; Higher education census; Sinaes.

**Resumo:** O estudo analisa os dados do Censo da Educação Superior Brasileira de 2022 a respeito da presença de estudantes estrangeiros na graduação e seus países de origem, com o objetivo de discutir a internacionalização das instituições de educação superior (IES), no país. Dados coletados no Questionário do Estudante do Enade 2021 também são analisados para se discutir em que medida as ações de internacionalização das IES brasileiras são mensuradas em instrumentos da política avaliativa do Sistema Nacional de Avaliação da Educação Superior (Sinaes). Por fim, discute-se a forma como a internacionalização aparece no instrumento de avaliação institucional externa, principal forma de indução de qualidade no sistema brasileiro de educação superior, em vigência. Constatou-se uma baixa presença de estudantes estrangeiros se graduando no Brasil, pouca articulação entre o que é medido no censo e o que é esperado como qualidade na avaliação externa, e a inexistência de estatísticas oficiais a respeito da mobilidade estudantil para fora na graduação.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação superior; Internacionalização da educação; Mobilidade estudantil; Censo da educação superior; Sinaes.

<sup>1</sup> Doctor in Sociology. University of Brasília (Full Professor). Brasília, DF, Brasil. E-mail: [sovieira1@gmail.com](mailto:sovieira1@gmail.com); Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/3287025746166245>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6948-1549>.

<sup>2</sup> Bachelor in Business Administration. University of Brasília (Master's candidate in Education). Brasília, DF, Brasil. E-mail: [edson1814@gmail.com](mailto:edson1814@gmail.com); Lattes: <http://lattes.cnpq.br/4719459597716181>; ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-7201-3363>.

**Resumen:** El estudio analiza datos del Censo Brasileño de Educación Superior de 2022 sobre la presencia de estudiantes extranjeros de pregrado y sus países de origen, con el objetivo de discutir la internacionalización de las instituciones de educación superior en el país. Los datos recopilados en el Cuestionario de Estudiantes Enade 2021 también se analizan para discutir en qué medida las acciones de internacionalización de las IES brasileñas se miden en instrumentos de la política de evaluación del Sistema Nacional de Evaluación de la Educación Superior (Sinaes). Finalmente, discutimos cómo la internacionalización aparece en el instrumento de evaluación institucional externa, la principal forma de inducción de calidad en el sistema brasileño hoy. Resulta que hay una baja presencia de estudiantes extranjeros que se gradúan en Brasil, poca articulación entre lo que se mide en el censo y lo que se espera como calidad en la evaluación externa, y la ausencia total de estadísticas oficiales sobre la movilidad de los estudiantes en el exterior durante la graduación.

**Palabras clave:** Educación universitaria; Internacionalización de la educación; Movilidad estudiantil; Censo de la Educación Superior; Sinaes.

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## Introduction

This article aims to analyze the distribution of foreign students enrolled in undergraduate courses in Brazil, according to the main countries of origin and the proportion of these students in public and private higher education institutions (HEI), based on data from the Higher Education Census (Censup) published, respectively, in 2021 and 2022. Furthermore, this work analyzes the answers of Brazilian students to three questions related to internationalization processes collected by the Student Questionnaire /Enade 2021 (National Exam of Students' Performance)

As a theme, the discussion in this work relates to the internationalization of higher education. As such, it presents and analyzes data that demonstrates that the promotion of internationalization actions is mostly occurring through institutional assessment instruments, considering that these actions configure as a policy indicator of the National Higher Education Assessment System (Sinaes), which was instituted by the Law 10,861, 14<sup>th</sup> April 2004.

The problematization in this work is based on three basic presuppositions. The first one concerns the fact that, since it involves multiple realities, both the fields of worldwide higher education and in Brazil must be viewed as a complex space that englobes a variety of agents and institutions. In this field higher education is offered by universities as well

as by heterogenous and diverse groups of non-higher education institutions which essentially have different profiles, vocations, and missions as well as specific characteristics both in private and public spheres.

The second presupposition is in line with Knight's (2020) thesis in the sense that internationalization is a means, not an end. As such, it is an important process for higher education to achieve broader objectives by means of a vast set of policies, strategies, actions, and agents, all aiming to foment a cooperation between universities and other types of HEIs. Consequently, internationalization promotes a big opening movement of countries to external social relations and becomes an important means of generating and amplifying educational, scientific, and technological competencies among countries.

The third one considers that, in the process of higher education internationalization, students' mobility strategies reveal that their definition is associated with the very concept of quality of this educational level. The understanding of this idea implies the view of students' mobility as one of the elements that contribute to intensifying internationalization, since, as a quality indicator, it is pursued by world-class universities. Furthermore, it is agreed that student mobility is the most visible facet of higher education internationalization (Van Damme, 2001)

The methodology employed to construct this paper involves bibliographic research on the subject and documental analysis of the Student Questionnaire/Enade 2021, as well as consultations to statistical data released by the Censo de Educação Superior and by the Sinopse Estatística do Enade. These data were produced by the Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira (Inep) and are related to the years of 2021 and 2022 (Inep, 2022a, 2022b, 2022d, 2023). The theoretical framework maps and leverages the contributions of researchers in higher education, with a focus on the internationalization of this educational level.

This paper is structured in five parts, besides the introduction and final considerations. The first part defines in broad terms the field of higher education as a competitive space formed by various institutions, having different missions, vocations, and profiles in both public and private spheres. The second analyzes the recent expansion of the higher education field in Brazil, between 2016 and 2022. This analysis is based on statistical data that reveal traces of this expansion, especially the growing and constant growth of the private sector.

The third part discusses foreign students' enrollments in postgraduate programs in Brazil, according to the data from Censup 2022. We focus on the 20 largest countries of origin

of these students as well on 20 public and private Brazilian HEIs with the largest number of these students, with the same data source, albeit regarding the year of 2021.

The fourth part discusses the answers presented by Brazilian students that participated in the Enade 2021 to three questions concerning internationalization. These questions were collected by the Student Questionnaire, one of the instruments that are part of the exam. The last part problematizes internationalization as an indicator in the assessment policies of Sinaes.

## 1. The higher education field: diversity of scenarios, practices, and academic vocations

In Brazil and all over the world the higher education field is heterogenous, and it is possible to identify various segments, with different and specific characteristics caused by the diversity of HEIs that are part of it. As a result, the process of analyzing it entails an understanding of extremely different realities, since HEIs have specific missions, orientations, spatial distributions, and academic organizations. Nonetheless, there is still an ideological discourse treating it as an “uniform” field, although it is possible to verify institutions with different dynamics and management practices, as well as extremely complex and specific academic vocations (Martins, 2021).

The higher education field has many differences, especially when it comes to the contrast between public and private institutions. With respect to the private ones in Brazil, one institution may differ from another in several formal aspects. Concerning its academic organization, it may be a university, a university center, or a college. In terms of juridical constitution of its maintainer, it may be classified as a foundation, a civil association, or a civil society of private law. Moreover, we may distinguish between for profit entities and not for profit ones as well as between secular establishments and confessional ones. Another distinction relates to the nature of their activities – offered programs, having graduate programs, doing research and extension activities, teaching qualifications, among others. Without any doubt a diverse institutional morphology such as this requires that the analyses of the higher education field in the country consider elements that help understand its evolution and current configuration.

Due to the importance of higher education for a country’s development, it has received significant attention from researchers and governmental institutions, all aiming to understand its constitution and dynamics. Several international, national, regional, and local organizations all over the world have increased their interest in researching this theme, which foments different perceptions regarding its evolution.

Over the last forty years, the Brazilian higher education field has been undergoing many transformations in its configuration, occurring in different aspects and leading to a varied typology of institutions with specific characteristics and academic practices. In this context, its expansion has been of lately a target of strong criticism regarding the quality of its offerings. In analyzing this, Cunha (2007) argues that one of the main factors that has contributed to this situation lies in the fact that the government has been more preoccupied with growing the system in size rather than in quality.

It is worth registering that, in line with a historical tendency, higher education policies in Brazil have established a process over the last decades oriented towards the restriction of the public sphere and the expansion of the private sector, even if it is supposedly a controlled process. Hence, a critical analysis of this tendency requires consideration of the way new scenarios in the field of higher education have emerged, as well as the heterogeneity of the institutions configuring it.

As a matter of fact, the expansion of private HEIs in the last four decades has been accompanied by processes of institutional differentiation that resulted in a complex and heterogenous field, making it difficult to map and assess its practices and vocations, despite the autonomy granted them by the law to academically organize themselves. On the other hand, the public sector has faced considerable difficulties with funding and management to guarantee in an effective way democratization of access and provide quality education for all (Bertolin, Marcon, 2015).

## **2. Brazilian high education: movements regarding the number of HEIs and enrollments in on-campus and distance learning undergraduate programs (2016-2022)**

Data from Censup's statistical synopses from 2016 and 2022 (Inep, 2017d; 2023b) demonstrate that the number of HEIs increased by 7.8% in this period. From 2,407 HEIs, it went up to 2,595 (INEP, 2017d), and the most expressive increase, when it comes to administrative category, relates to the public federal institutions, which increased from 107 to 120, a 12.1% growth (Inep, 2023b). In addition, state institutions have also grown above average, since there were 133 in 2022, an increase on the order of 8.1% over the 123 from 2016.

In terms of academic organization of HEIs, since the census of 2016, the most expressive growth has been the one related to university centers, that grew from 166 to 381, an expressive increase of 129.5% in the period selected for analysis in this study. It

is noteworthy that the number of colleges dropped to 1.968 in 2022, from 2.004 in 2016, a decrease of 1.8%.

In 2022, the enrollments in undergraduate programs were concentrated, in decreasing order, at private for-profit universities, with 27.3% of the students (2,580,644). Then, in private for-profit university centers, with 11.7% (1,108,512). Private for-profit colleges had 7.8% of enrollments (725,525) in the same year, and the not-for-profit ones less than half of it, corresponding to 299,891 enrollments. The public colleges, in their turn, in the three federative levels, had just 1.2% (257,516) of enrollments in undergraduate programs in Brazil.

Between 2016 and 2022, enrollments in higher education increased both in on-campus and online programs relatively more than the increase related to HEIs. In 2016, there were 8,041,701 students; in 2022, there were 9,444,116, an increase of 17.3% in this period. Part of it was due to the relevant growth of 21.6% of students in undergraduate programs in the private sector, since the number of students went from 6,58,623 to 7,367,363 in the period (Inep, 2017d, 2023b).

In the same time interval, the public sector grew less, only 4.4%, from 1,999,078 to 2,076,753 enrollments in on-campus and online undergraduate programs. Considering both academic organization and administrative category, enrollments in federal colleges were those with the most expressive relative increase of 172.2% (1,682 to 4,579 respectively, in 2016 and 2022). In their turn, private university centers had an expansion of enrollments of 109.8%, from 1,392,439 students to 2,921,178 ones in the same period. In the opposite direction, private colleges had a decrease of 49.3% in their student population in undergraduate programs, from 2,023,571, in 2016, to 1,025,416 students, in 2022 (Inep, 2017d, 2023b).

It is worth noting that, in general, enrollments in distance learning programs significantly increased their weight in relation to the total, going from 1,494,418 to 4,330,934, corresponding to 18.6% of the total in 2016 and 45.9% in 2022 (Inep, 2017d, 2023b). Among all statistical movements discussed regarding the field of higher education in Brazil, in the period under analysis, this could be considered the most relevant in its reconfiguration. This is because, in a six-year period, almost half of the enrollments in undergraduate programs are now in distance learning programs.

The movements related to the number of HEIs and enrollments in on-campus and distance learning undergraduate programs, in the period under analysis, allows to infer that, despite the tendencies toward a concentration in private institutions and online programs, the higher education field in Brazil has different types of institutions, with



specific vocations, a reality that enables the understanding of this field as being deeply marked by heterogeneity and institutional diversity. In this context, it is reasonable to consider that internationalization requires considering the way such actions reflect the mission and the interests of each HEI. However, apparently, Sinaes policies are not yet capable of capturing the extension nor the variety of these actions, in view of the indicators used to assess them.

### **3. Foreign students enrolled in undergraduate courses in Brazil**

Censup presents data and relevant information for the understanding of students' profiles enrolled in on-campus undergraduate courses and online ones., in different types of HEIs, taking into consideration both the administrative nature and the academic organization in several regions of the country. This is one of the most important elements of internationalization of Brazilian higher education measured by the census.

The data released by Censup 2022 show that the number of foreign students increased by 24.9% in the period analyzed (Inep, 2017d, 2023b). However, when it comes to student mobility, this number does not represent a significant progress in terms of internationalization. This is because, in 2016, there were 15,796 foreign students enrolled in Brazilian HEIs (from a total of 8,048,701); this number changed to 9,735 in 2022, from a total of 9,444,116 students.

Therefore, between 2016 and 2022, the proportion of foreign students remained the same: only 0.2% of the student body in on-campus and online undergraduate programs (Inep, 2017d, 2023b). Table 1 shows the number and the proportion of foreign students enrolled in the forementioned programs in 2022, according to their distribution by academic organization and administrative category of Brazilian HEIs.

Table 1 – Number and proportion of foreign students at the undergraduate level (on-campus and distance learning), by academic organization and administrative category – Brazil (2022)

HEIs by academic organization and administrative category		Total enrollment	Foreign students	
			Enrollment	%
<b>Total and % in public HEIs</b>		<b>2,076,753</b>	<b>8,018</b>	<b>0,39%</b>
<b>University</b>	Federal	1,108,512	6,088	0.55%
	State	576,582	1,158	0.20%
	Municipal	35,164	67	0.19%
<b>University Center</b>	Federal	1,751	35	2.00%
	State	430	2	0.47%
	Municipal	13,504	17	0.13%
<b>College</b>	Federal	4,579	7	0.15%
	State	78,715	154	0.20%
	Municipal	27,522	39	0.14%
<b>Federal IF/CEFET</b>		229,994	451	0.20%
<b>Total and % in private HEIs</b>		<b>7,367,363</b>	<b>11,717</b>	<b>0.16%</b>
<b>University</b>	For-profit	2,580,644	3,628	0.14%
	Not-for-profit	839,505	2,037	0.24%
<b>University Center</b>	For-profit	2,326,685	2,485	0.11%
	Not-for-profit	595,113	2,057	0.35%
<b>College</b>	For-profit	725,525	720	0.10%
	Not-for-profit	299,891	790	0.26%
<b>Total</b>		<b>9,444,116</b>	<b>19,735</b>	<b>0.21%</b>

Source: Developed by the authors according to Inep (2023b).

Besides the low participation of foreign students in the Brazilian higher education system, Table 1 shows that, in general, these students are more concentrated in private HEIs, in total of 11,717 (59.4% of all foreign students, in 2022). Despite this, universities are the type of academic organization these students prefer. Public universities concentrate the largest participation with 37.1% (7,313), whereas 28.7% of foreign students undertook an undergraduate program in private universities (5,665). Also, HEISs with an above average participation (more than 0.2%) of foreign students in their student body are, in decreasing order, public federal universities, with 0.55%; private not-for-profit university centers, with 0.35%, and private not-for-profit universities with 0.24% (Inep, 2023b).

Another internationalization element captured by Censup is the nationality of the faculty in service. In 2022, there were 3,939 foreign professors in Brazilian HEIs (Inep, 2023b).



In the face of 316,792<sup>3</sup> professors at the undergraduate level registered in the census, the proportion of foreign teaching staff, 1.2%, is higher than that of foreign students in on-campus and online programs. Of those professors, 74.2% are in public federal universities (2,146) and state ones (778). Nevertheless, despite the presence of foreign professors in Brazilian HEIs, it does not imply that the classes they conduct are in their mother tongue, or even English, something that would be closer to measures of at home internationalization than the mere presence of a foreign professor in the classroom. Still, one may argue that foreign professors represent an amplification of academic web connections, i.e. new international contacts, which become available for students and broaden their horizons during the program as well for the rest of their lives.

According to Belle and Jones' (2015) ideas, Morosini and Dalla Corte (2022, p. 63) advance toward the understanding of internationalization at home (*At home*) referring to the

[...] integration of the international and intercultural dimensions in the formal and informal curriculum, intentionally involving students in domestic learning environments. It is one of the models of higher education internationalization, which integrates the model of Internationalization of the Curriculum [...].

Censup also presents information on countries of origin of foreign students enrolled in on-campus and distance learning undergraduate programs in Brazil. However, this information is presented in statistical notes of the census, and they are not available in microdata. In this work, we present the list of the 20 largest countries of origin of these students (Table 2), according to Censup 2022.

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<sup>3</sup> The number of the total faculty staff in service shown in Table 2.8 in Censup 2022 (Inep, 2023) is 316.792, although the sum of the numbers of professors by administrative category and academic organization is 343.262. As we have not found any justification for this discrepancy, we have adopted the total number shown in Table 2.8.

Table 2 – 20 largest countries of origin according to the number of students enrolled in undergraduate programs (on-campus and distance learning)

Country	Foreign students	
	Number	Proportion
United States	1,776	11.1%
Angola	1,512	9.5%
Japan	1,407	8.8%
Paraguay	1,170	7.3%
Bolivia	1,071	6.7%
Guinea-Bissau	1,042	6.5%
Haiti	1,039	6.5%
Venezuela	1,023	6.4%
Argentina	980	6.1%
Peru	916	5.7%
Colombia	797	5.0%
Portugal	665	4.2%
Uruguay	516	3.2%
Chile	370	2.3%
Italy	337	2.1%
Cape Verde	303	1.9%
Mozambique	269	1.7%
United Kingdom	267	1.7%
Cuba	256	1.6%
Germany	254	1.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,970</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Inep (2023a).

The total of 15,970 foreign students in Table 2 represents 80.9% of foreigners enrolled in Brazilian HEIs (19,735), in 2022 (Inep, 2023b). Besides, the data demonstrate that the main relations of the country at the undergraduate level occur among Latin-American countries and those of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP).

According to the data released by Censup 2016 on foreign students' countries of origin (Inep, 2017a), we note that 5,951 students were Latin-American, and, in 2022, this number changed to 8,138 students (an increase of 36.7% in the period). In their turn, there were 4,465 students from CPLP in 2016 (Inep, 2017a), and 3,791 students in 2022, a decrease of 15.1% in the same period (Inep, 2023a).

Some countries that are not part of these groups stand out in both years under analysis. Nonetheless, this behavior is observed in two different ways. The first one reveals an increase of enrolled foreign students, a tendency represented by the United States (574 students, in 2016, and 1,776, in 2022), by Japan (respectively, 902 and 1,407) and by the United Kingdom (a change from 129 to 267). The second one demonstrates a

stagnation in enrollments of these students: Italy (a change from 323 to 337) and Germany (260 to 254). Considering these data, one may argue that there exist countries that, despite variations, maintain more stable and, in a certain way, more traditional relationships with Brazil at the higher education level.

However, it must be observed that data concerning the presence of foreign students in undergraduate programs in Brazil does not mean successful higher education internationalization. Although it is the main data of Censup regarding internationalization, students' motivation to have a degree in the country are diverse and may not be related to internationalization actions or academic mobility promoted by HEIs or even a consequence of higher education policies in the period from 2016 to 2021(temporal cut discussed in this article). We also admit that there is a connection, albeit small, with Sinaes assessment policy.

What was mentioned before may be better understood when analyzing the proportion of students coming from other countries, in relation with the total student body of the 20 largest HEIs in absolute terms of those foreigners enrolled in undergraduate programs (Table 3):

Tabela 3 – 20 largest HEIs in number of enrollments of foreign students in on-campus and distance learning undergraduate programs – Brazil (2021)<sup>4</sup>

	HEIs (Acronym)	Administrative category	UF	Total enrollment	Foreign students	
					Enrollment	%
1	Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (Unilab)	Public Federal	CE	4,801	1,398	29.1%
2	Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana (Unila)	Public Federal	PR	3,477	1,368	39.3%
3	Universidade Paulista (Unip)	Private	SP	413,709	863	0.2%
4	Universidade Estácio de Sá (Unesa)	Private	SP	409,218	696	0.2%
5	Universidade Nove de Julho (Uninove)	Private	SP	166,562	448	0.3%
6	Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)	Public Federal	SC	33,486	344	1.0%
7	Universidade de São Paulo (USP)	Public State	SP	63,276	342	0.5%
8	Centro Universitário Leonardo da Vinci (Uniassevi)	Private	SC	538,180	337	0.1%
9	Universidade Cruzeiro do Sul (Unicsul)	Private	SP	127,255	277	0.2%
10	Universidade Estadual Paulista Júlio de Mesquita Filho (Unesp)	Public State	SP	36,599	275	0.8%
11	Universidade Cesumar (Unicesumar)	Private	PR	273,249	266	0.1%
12	Universidade Pitágoras Anhanguera (Unopar)	Private	PR	457,399	260	0.1%
13	Universidade Anhanguera (Uniderp)	Private	MS	206,317	228	0.1%
14	Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS)	Public Federal	SC	8,609	213	2.5%
15	Centro Universitário Estácio de Ribeirão Preto (Estácio Ribeirão)	Private	SP	90,416	195	0.2%
16	Universidade de Brasília (UnB)	Public Federal	DF	40,145	191	0.5%
17	Universidade Cidade de São Paulo (Unicid)	Private	SP	85,104	182	0.2%
18	Centro Universitário das Faculdades Metropolitanas Unidas (FMU)	Private	SP	53,528	178	0.3%
19	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)	Public Federal	RS	34,203	146	0.4%
20	Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF)	Public Federal	RJ	44,987	145	0.3%

Source: Developed by the authors according to Inep (2022a, 2022b).

<sup>4</sup> Table 3 was created according to data from the disclosure presentation of Censup, 2021, since the same data have not been found in the census 2022. At the time of the production of this article, they were available in: <https://hewww.gov.br/inep/pt-br/areas-de-atuacao/pesquisas-estatisticas-e-indicadores/censo-da-educacao-superior/resultados>.

The data in Table 3 demonstrate a significant difference in the proportion of foreign students at the University of International Integration of Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (Unilab) and at the Federal University of Latin-American Integration (Unila), regarding the other 18 largest HEIs. We highlight that these two universities were created with a mission to integrate and foster solidarity and understanding among nations of the communities in which they are inserted. Thus, developing internationalization practices according to solidary cooperation. The fact that 29.1% (1,398) of the students of Unilab and 39.13% (1,368) of the students of Unila have foreign nationality attests to the consecution of the missions. This type of comprehensive internationalization is only seen in Brazil in these institutions. “It refers to the *ethos* and the institutional value [...] The comprehensive internationalization reaches not only life on campus, but also the external constituent elements, as well as the partnerships and interinstitutional relations” (Morosini; Dalla Corte, 2021, p. 138).

The data in Table 3 attest that some Brazilian HEIs have a higher participation of foreign students when compared to the national average, which is 2%, as mentioned before (Inep, 2017d; 2023b). This is the case of UFFS (2.5%), UFSC (1.0%), Unesp (0.8%), USP (0.5%), UnB (0.5%) and UFRGS (0.4%). These percentages indicate there is an effort in these institutions to excel in terms of students’ international mobility, with the attraction of international students. At the same time, we observe that many HEIs, even with higher absolute numbers of foreign students, do not show more participation of these students than the national average. This is the case with the institutions that are part of big educational groups, such as Unip, Estácio e Uninove, which contain the largest number of foreign students in Brazil after Unilab and Unila. Although these institutions have thousands of undergraduate students, they represent 0.2% and 0.3% of students coming from a foreign country.

Considering what has been said up to this point, we may argue that the main data collected by Censup concerning the internationalization of higher education in Brazil do not evidence more information that clearly demonstrates the configuration of internationalization actions. Yet, these are data that indirectly show some level of internationalization by HEIs, especially federal and state public universities, according to data concerning the years we take into consideration for the purpose of this article. Discussing this further, the following section is regarding the data collected by the Student Questionnaire, conducted during Enade/2021.

#### 4. Questions related to internationalization collected by the Questionário do Estudante/Enade 2021.

Enade 2021 reached 489,866 graduates, among bachelor's degree seniors, teaching degree seniors and technological degree ones, who had to participate in Enade that year (Inep, 2022d). However, according to the mentioned source, only 75.5% (369,962) of these eligible graduates took the exam<sup>5</sup>. The Questionário do Estudante (Student Questionnaire) /Enade is presented to the students when they take the exam and is an important source of information concerning internationalization initiatives by HEIs. Despite that, we note that robust data regarding the theme is not collected by the questionnaire.

The questionnaire is made of 68 questions and students must answer them online and before the exam. The questionnaire serves the purpose of compounding the participants' profile, by integrating contextual information to personal perceptions and experiences. The answers to the objective questions address the HEIs infrastructure, the academic organization of the program, as well as aspects of professional education, and contribute to the assessment of students, according to their course trajectory and experiences at HEIs.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, in the questionnaires 2021 and 2022, 11 questions were introduced to address “some possible repercussions of the pandemic on the educational process. The answers will help contextualize the results of the Enade exam in the face of this unique educational scenario, but they [were] not used to assess courses and institutions” (Inep, 2022x, p. 233).

There are four questions concerning HEIs internationalization in the questionnaire: questions 14, 17, 24, and 53. However, for the purposes of this article, we considered only 3 of them.

The results presented by the students who took the Enade 2021 (Inep, 2022d) regarding the question 14 – “Did you participate in curriculum programs/activities abroad during the program?” – show that, 82.6% (404,525) answered negatively to the question and only 0.9% (4,458) answered positively to it. From the latter, 0.4% (1,832) participated in an exchange program of their own institution; 0.3% (1,586) participated in a non-institutional exchange

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<sup>5</sup> In 2021, based on Regulation 494/2021 Enade was applied for the purpose of performance assessing of students in the fields: I – teaching degrees (17 programs) II – bachelor's degrees (10 programs); III- technological degrees (3 programs). Enade exam was applied on November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

program; 0.1% (277) in a program financed by the federal government (such as Marca, Bafitec, PLI, and others)<sup>6</sup>; and 0.1% (571) in the program Ciência sem Fronteiras/CsF<sup>7</sup> (Inep, 2022d).

We must note that the same question, in Enade 2016 (Inep) had 3% of positive answers, with 1.4% (3,003) of the students participating in the CsF program. Concerning this difference from 2016 to 2021, in relative and absolute numbers, we may argue that the opportunities of international academic mobility decreased in a significant way at the undergraduate level. It is possible to reason that mobility is now more frequent by means of initiatives of the own institution or by the students themselves.

The answers to the question 14 of the mentioned questionnaire also point out that the federal public universities have more opportunities of international student exchange, since 1.5% (1,536) of the candidates reported that they had participated in curriculum activities abroad. In private institutions, only 0.7% (2,303) of the candidates had participated in such activities.

Next question is number 24 – Have you had the opportunity to learn a foreign language in the institution? This question leads us to reason that, considering the different concepts of internationalization, the offering of foreign languages by HEIs is part of the effort toward at home internationalization. Moreover, in parallel with offerings of courses in foreign languages, it is a very appropriate internationalization initiative, especially in a context in which student international mobility has low financial support.

As reported by the candidates in the Questionnaire Enade 2021 (Inep, 2022d), we may assert that the mentioned initiative has been relatively spread in the programs assessed in that year, considering that 22.7% (111,620) of the students stated that they had studied, in some way, a foreign language. This proportion is higher than the national average in regions such as the Northeast (24.0% or 18,784), North (26.6% or 5,201) and the South (29.5% or 27,796). Nonetheless, the most notable data is the difference in the answers among candidates from the public sector and the private one. While 31% (50,167) of the candidates from public HEIs answer positively to this question, only 18.8% (61,453) do so in private ones. Public federal HEIs have the highest rate of positive answers, with 33.4% (32,127), whereas the private not-for-profit institutions have the lowest one, 17.5% (43,531) (Inep, 2022d).

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<sup>6</sup> They refer to the program of Regional Academic Mobility in Accredited Courses, to the program *Brésil France Ingénieur Technologie* and to the program of International Teaching Degrees

<sup>7</sup> CsF was a vigorous educational policy in Brazil toward an internationalization of higher education, aiming to “promote consolidation, expansion and internationalization of science, technology, innovation, and competitiveness in Brazil by means of exchange programs and international mobility in different levels of education, besides the attraction of foreign researchers to Brazil. The initiative was developed by the then Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovation and by the Ministry of Education, whose implementation was assigned to CNPq and Capes.



Finally, question number 53: Have you been offered opportunities of exchange or training programs abroad? In this case the answers were different when compared to the ones addressed above. They could be “1 I totally disagree” to “6 I totally agree”, besides the following possibilities: “() I do not know how to answer it” () It does not apply (Inep, 2022c, p. 7). It is possible to conclude that the focus of the question falls on the institutional action to foster the cross-border internationalization. According to Dalla Corte *et al.* (2022), this type of internationalization is characterized by a cross-border nature and may include mobility of students, professors, and technicians.

The cross-border internationalization is the one that occurs by mobility, whether out (people going out) or in (receiving people). It consists of all forms of higher education implemented in person beyond the country's border. However, it is proven that mobility is an important factor, but insufficient to internationalize a university (Dalla Corte *et al.*, 2022, p.13).

In the period between 2016 and 2021, regarding the perception by students toward the offer of exchange opportunities by the institutions, we note a drop of the internationalization indicator, and it appears to capture the end of the CsF program in 2017. Thus, while in 2021 positive answers (I partially agree; I totally agree) to the question 53 of the Student Questionnaire represented 24.3% of the candidates, in 2016, the same question resulted in 49.8% (107.473) of candidates agreeing with the assertion (Inep, 2017e, 2022d). This would suggest that the perception of Brazilian students in those years in which CsF was operating was much more positive regarding the possibility of participating in an exchange program.

## 5. Internationalization as an indicator of the Sinaes assessment policy

In the face of the considerations given above, in respect with the measurement of internationalization by the official instruments of data collection for higher education in Brazil, i.e. the Questionário do Estudante/Enade, it is important to relate them to other two components of Sinaes, reflecting over their relevance in inducing internationalization through the external institutional assessment and the program evaluation.

When we consider the data from Censup, it is reasonable to suppose that they are not collected to measure a dimension of internationalization of higher education in Brazil. Maybe it is not part of the conception of the census. As to the questions from the Students Questionnaire/Enade, we perceive the attempt to measure students' perception toward academic experiences that have, to a greater or lesser extent, relations with internationalization initiatives. Nonetheless, we find in the instrument of external

institutional assessment used by Inep's commissions for reaccreditation of HEIs the concern in measuring (at least at an institutional level) internationalization initiatives on the part of the institutions. Yet, it is possible to classify this initiative as being much more an induction instrument of internationalization measures than the measurement of levels or of the quality of the internationalization initiatives in their different concepts and extension.

When we analyze the instrument used by Inep for the institutional reaccreditation (Inep, 2017c), internationalization appears as an indicator expressed on Axis 3 – Assessment of Academic Policies, but also appears as a quality criterion to obtain the concept 4 in 3 other indicators.

Particularly, the indicator 3.8 – Institutional Policy For Internationalization has a definition of its concept 5 the following:

The institutional policy for internationalization is articulated with the PDI, presents activities focused on cooperation and exchange programs and it is coordinated by a regulated group, responsible for systematizing agreements and international conventions related to teaching and mobility for professors and students (Inep, 2017c, p.19).

Despite certain clarity in the indicator, this definition comprehends a very restricted part of what we may consider internationalization in higher education. In this indicator, for instance, initiatives related to the concepts of at home internationalization are not contemplated. In the Brazilian context, in which there is great diversity of institutional types and absence of public policy that articulates institutional initiatives for outward academic mobility, ignoring internationalization initiatives that contribute to academic experiences within the institutional context is somewhat problematic on the part of Inep when assigning an academic quality indicator.

The three other indicators of academic policy express the same conception of internationalization and they focus on academic mobility initiatives for students and faculty. They are: 3.1 Teaching policies and academic-administrative actions for undergraduate programs; 3.6 – Institutional policies and fostering and diffusion actions for faculty academic production, and indicator 3.12 – Institutional policies and fostering actions for students' production and participation in events (undergraduate and postgraduate programs). From the concept 4 description, all these indicators present the understanding that international academic mobility represents the high-quality level of institutional actions.

When we observe the centrality of the concept of academic mobility for the instrument of external institutional assessment, one contradiction arises. Not only

because of the comprehension toward the scarce material conditions for the autonomous attainment of this conception of internationalization by HEIs, but also because the instrument itself carries, in its glossary, a wide conception of internationalization, as can be inferred from the following:

#### 39. Internationalization

Programs and actions that insert HEIs in the international context by means of cooperation with other institutions, knowledge transference, academic mobility for faculty and students, foreign students enrolled in HEIs, course offering in foreign language, encouragement for publications and participation in international events, participation in international assessment processes among others (Inep, 2017c, p. 38).

Finally, it is worth noting that the assessment instrument for programs recognition (Inep, 2017b) 'internationalization' mentions only once, in its indicator 1.2 – Support For Students, in the didactic-pedagogical dimension of the instrument. In this context, the indicator has, from its conception, the participation in international exchange programs as a quality criterion for an undergraduate program.

### **Final considerations**

The higher education field presents an evident heterogeneous character, and it is possible to identify in it many institutional segments revealing different characteristics. In Brazil's case, we may identify a complex group of institutions with many different practices and vocations. This institutional heterogeneity demands a careful examination of the differences present in both public and private HEIs. In this context, policies and internationalization practices gain significant prominence.

In Brazil, internationalization serves as a referential guide for higher education quality since it was instated as a quality indicator for Sinaes by the Law 10.861/2004 (Brasil, 2004). However, official statistics demonstrate that the understanding of internationalization as a quality dimension is still far from desirable.

The undertaken reflections in this article present arguments leading to the conclusion that the presence of foreign students in undergraduate programs in Brazil still reveals the tendency observed in the last years, which corresponds to 0.2%, in a five-year period - 2016 to 2021 (Inep, 2017d; 2023b). From the data analyzed, we note that, in general, the number of students in public and private Brazilian HEIs is still very low. At the same time, one of the main indicators of assessment instruments, outward mobility, is not measured by Inep in a

consistent way, in light of Sinaes policy. The latter induces internationalization actions by means of instruments of external assessment, but there is little focus on the instruments of program assessment and on official instruments of data collection. In this context, in Brazil, the presence of foreign students in undergraduate programs occurs through initiatives of few HEIs, and the international mobility depends largely upon the individual capacity of students.

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