

ARTICLES

Submitted 06.10.2020. Approved 03.02.2021

This article is co-authorship by a member of RAE's Scientific Editorial Board and was evaluated by double-blind review process with impartiality and independence. Guest Scientific Editor: Douglas Proctor

Original version | DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S0034-759020220105>

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF BUSINESS SCHOOLS BASED ON FACULTY ACTIVITIES: EXPLANATIONS FROM THE SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Internacionalização de Escolas de Negócios baseada nas atividades dos acadêmicos: Elucidações trazidas pela Teoria da Troca Social

La internacionalización de las Escuelas de Negocios a partir de las actividades de los académicos: Aclaraciones aportadas por la teoría del intercambio social

Marcello Romani-Dias^{1,2,3} | mromdias@hotmail.com | ORCID: 0000-0002-1842-9871

Angela Maria Scroccaro Biasoli⁴ | angelascroccaro@yahoo.com.br | ORCID: 0000-0001-7685-3139

Jorge Carneiro⁴ | jorge.carneiro@fgv.br | ORCID: 0000-0003-3321-5430

Aline dos Santos Barbosa^{3,5} | aline8barbosa@gmail.com | ORCID: 0000-0001-9745-0873

¹Universidade Positivo, Programa de Mestrado e Doutorado em Administração, Curitiba, PR, Brazil

²Universidade Positivo, Programa de Mestrado e Doutorado em Gestão Ambiental, PR, Paraná, Brazil

³Faculdade do Grupo Etapa, Escola Superior de Engenharia e Gestão, São Paulo, SP, Brazil

⁴Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Escola de Administração de Empresas de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brazil

⁵Universidade Estácio de Sá, Mestrado em Administração e Desenvolvimento Empresarial, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

ABSTRACT

The internationalization of higher education has gained in theoretical and empirical importance in recent decades. In this context, this article aims to describe and analyze the internationalization of business schools from the activities of their academics and based on the propositions defended by the Social Exchange Theory (SET). To achieve our goal we conducted 39 interviews with academics from business schools in the United States and Brazil, including Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Harvard, Getúlio Vargas Foundation (FGV) and University of São Paulo (USP). We found that: (i) there are individual rewards that are not addressed by SET; (ii) there are benefits to third parties not covered by SET; (iii) certain non-rational choices are not provided by SET; and (iv) the condition of equivalence between costs and rewards provided by SET has its weaknesses. With these findings we add theoretical and empirical contributions to our theme.

KEYWORDS | Internationalization in higher education, academics, social exchange theory, business schools, international activities.

RESUMO

A internacionalização do ensino superior vem ganhando importância teórica e empírica nas décadas recentes. Nesse contexto, este artigo objetiva descrever e analisar a internacionalização de escolas de negócios a partir das atividades dos acadêmicos e com base nas proposições defendidas pela Teoria da Troca Social (SET, do inglês Social Exchange Theory). Para atingir nosso objetivo, conduzimos 39 entrevistas com acadêmicos de escolas de negócios dos Estados Unidos e do Brasil, incluindo Instituto Tecnológico de Massachusetts (MIT), Harvard, Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV) e Universidade de São Paulo (USP). Temos como principais achados: (i) existem recompensas individuais que não são abordadas pela SET; (ii) há benefícios para outras partes interessadas que não são contemplados pela SET; (iii) há certas decisões não racionais não previstas pela SET; (iv) e a condição de equivalência entre custos e recompensas prevista pela SET apresenta fragilidades. Com esses resultados, trazemos contribuições teóricas e empíricas para a temática.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE | Internacionalização do ensino superior, educação internacional, acadêmicos, social exchange theory, escolas de negócios, atividades internacionais.

RESUMEN

La internacionalización de la educación superior ha ganado importancia teórica y empírica en las últimas décadas. En este contexto, este artículo tiene como objetivo describir y analizar la internacionalización de las escuelas de negocios a partir de las actividades de los académicos y de las propuestas defendidas por la Teoría del Intercambio Social (SET). Para lograr nuestro objetivo, realizamos 39 entrevistas con académicos de escuelas de negocios de Estados Unidos y Brasil, incluidos Instituto de Tecnología de Massachusetts (MIT), Harvard, Fundación Getúlio Vargas (FGV) y la Universidad de São Paulo (USP). Los resultados principales son: (i) que hay recompensas individuales que la SET no aborda; (ii) que hay beneficios para las partes interesadas no cubiertos por la SET; (iii) que hay ciertas decisiones no racionales no previstas por la SET; (iv) y que la condición de equivalencia entre costos y recompensas prevista por la SET tiene debilidades. Con estos resultados aportamos contribuciones teóricas y empíricas al tema.

PALABRAS CLAVE | Internacionalización de la educación superior, educación internacional, académicos, social exchange theory, escuelas de negocios, actividades internacionales.

INTRODUCTION

The internationalization of academics is still little conceptualized in the literature, but because the topic is of interest not only to academics themselves, but also to higher education institutions, it has been the subject of long discussions in the academic area, especially at conferences. In this context, we consider that academics are operating internationally, for example, when, in performing their academic duties, they engage in transnational activities, form partnerships with authors outside their country, attain a level of international scientific impact with their publications, publish in international journals, and engage in other activities that will be covered in the course of this article (Carneiro, Bandeira-de-Mello, Cuervo-Cazurra, Gonzalez-Perez, Olivas-Luján, Parente, & Xavier, 2015; Criswell, 2014; Lazzarini, 2012; Proctor, 2016).

Although the topic of the internationalization of higher education is relevant in several areas (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Knight, 2004), in practice not all institutions and academics have opportunities and the conditions that facilitate this process. For example, 63% of the academics in Brazil have never had research experience outside the country. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, 24% of the academics are foreigners from countries such as Italy, China, and India (British Council, 2018; Hotcourses, 2019). It is in this scenario that the research programs of higher education institutions are seeking to qualify and broaden this discussion before the international academic community by way of their professors and students (Batista & Romani-Dias, 2021). More specifically, academics have sought to publish their work in international journals and conferences, mainly to progress professionally, while maintaining their academic positions and gaining recognition. There are, however, several facilitators of and barriers to this internationalization process that deserve investigation.

As this is a topic of interest not only to academics themselves, but also to the higher education institutions in which they work, and in view of the scarcity of theoretical-empirical studies on the internationalization of academics, we begin this study with the following research question: In what ways can the internationalization of business schools be explained by the activities of academics, based on the proposals of the Social Exchange Theory (SET)?

SET deals with: (a) a broad negotiation scenario, in which two or more parties exchange resources; and (b) how these exchanges occur and how they affect the relationship between the parties involved (Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017). To achieve the objective of the article, we undertook 39 interviews with international academics. We identified four categories of analysis that highlight SET's weaknesses and, at the same time, offer opportunities for developing it, namely: (i) rewards result from the internationalization of academics, which was not foreseen by the theory; (ii) the benefits academics gain from internationalization are not restricted to the individual level, as originally claimed by SET; (iii) contrary to the premises of the theory, academics who choose to internationalize their careers do not do so on an exclusively rational basis; and (iv) the costs and rewards of one international activity, when compared to another, are rarely equivalent, which is contrary to the theory.

The article makes several contributions with these results. The study contributes to the practice by putting forward theoretical and empirical arguments for academics and institutions to develop their internationalization strategies, based on the perceptions of academics working in the US and Brazil. As an example, our analysis can assist higher education institutions increase their predictive capabilities vis-à-vis their professors by providing insights into the motivators and barriers present in the internationalization process in higher education. Another contribution, which is theoretical, is intended for the SET, and presents its weaknesses and the opportunities for developing it. We also discuss in this study the existence of relevant topics that are part of the internationalization process, such as motivators, facilitators, and conditions that bar the internationalization of academics.

THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ACADEMICS

The concept of the internationalization of academics is still little explored. The literature has discussed the internationalization of education, the internationalization of higher education institutions, and the internationalization of students (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010; Tran & Pham, 2016; Wit, 2020; Wu, 2018). There are few studies, however, that deal effectively with the internationalization of academics (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Sanderson, 2008; Woldegiyorgis, Proctor, & Wit, 2018; Romani-Dias, Carneiro & Barbosa, 2019; Romani-Dias & Carneiro, 2020). We shall now describe, therefore, the concepts that pertain to the topic. Internationalization is the integration process of an international, intercultural, or global extension in education, research, and the functions of a higher education institution (Knight, 2008).

Dewey and Duff (2009) mention that academics are the main agents in the internationalization process of educational institutions, through their publications, participation in conferences and research groups, membership of editorial boards, and the organization of student exchanges, among other activities that may or may not need to cross borders. International publishing, for example, is a type of internationalization activity that can be done “at home”. On this point, Teekens (2004) and Sanderson (2008) highlight the engagement of academics in constructing international curriculums as one of the activities that can be done “at home”, and is included in the phenomenon of internationalization. Research, for example, is an important dimension of the internationalization process. Indeed, international mobility is seen as a mechanism for increasing the dynamism of teaching activities in other countries, as is collaboration in research and building networks (Ramos, 2018; Santin, 2016).

As to what motivates academics to go international, Ramos (2018) points out that the expected determinants of internationalization are the greater impact of the research and a more international profile, since many academics seek to complement their education with periods of study or research abroad, either under the guise of a doctoral internship, or postdoctoral research. Santin (2016) adds that the motivations for international collaboration are manifold and involve both internal standards in the scientific field, and the expected benefits of joint work between countries.

The main drivers of internationalization are improvements in the quality of research, personal and institutional recognition, increased professional opportunities, and the learning that is enabled by international insertion (Carneiro et al., 2015; Criswell, 2014; Lazzarini, 2012; Proctor, 2016). The academics whom we interviewed stressed their wish to participate in the academic debate on their research topics, arguing that by doing so they would increase their potential for influence and make a practical contribution to the country. In this argument, it is noted that the professor's area or discipline will also influence their engagement with internationalization (Agnew, 2013; Leask, 2013).

Although various factors motivate academics in this internationalization process, there are barriers and/or inhibitors that can hamper or even derail it completely. In this regard, a lack of administrative and/or organizational support at the institutional or departmental level is one of the main factors that inhibits the greater internationalization of research programs and their respective academics (Ramos, 2018).

Another barrier to the internationalization of academics concerns the limitations from their (lack of) command of a foreign language (English in most cases), which particularly affects activities in the fields of human sciences and applied social sciences, in which the ability to articulate an argument is even more essential (Mazenod, 2018). Carneiro et al. (2015) and Lazzarini (2012) also argue that the main barriers perceived by academics are: (a) the difference in the procedures that international publications use to evaluate papers; and (b) the failure by some

educational institutions to value the time and resources required for internationalization, and the effort required to produce papers. These are the main barriers encountered by the authors that hinder the internationalization process of academics.

Although we may perceive barriers in the internationalization process, certain facilitators are also available to academics. Teaching faculty who have obtained their doctoral degrees abroad learn from this experience and may later become internationalization facilitators, not only for themselves but also for the programs in which they work (Leask, 2013; Ramos, 2018). On this point, Leask (2013) argues the need for academics to internationalize so they can later develop an international career. Other factors identified as facilitators by Carneiro et al. (2015) and Lazzarini (2012) are: inclusion in international collaboration networks; the learning inherent in the process of publishing internationally; and the empirical potential that exists in some countries, such as Brazil, which comes from the plurality and heterogeneity of the various types of educational institution, both in terms of quantity and quality.

In discussing motivators, drivers and barriers to internationalization, we must take into account different academic contexts. When investigating the case of Australia, for example, Proctor (2016) argues that social isolation can be both a driver and a barrier to the country's international engagement. Majee and Ress (2018), who carried out a study in South Africa and Brazil, give another example: the "internationalization of higher education has mostly been theorized from a Euro-American perspective, taking less into account how legacies of colonial expansion impose unique demands on universities" (p. 1). From these authors we can infer that, while we can seek consensus between concepts found in the literature, we must address the peculiarities of each academic context when investigating internationalization.

SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

SET emerged from economic and exchange concepts, its focus being on how social interaction happens and the factors that motivate social exchanges. Homans (1958), a precursor to SET studies, points out that all relationships are formed, sustained, or broken due to an analysis of the basic economic principles of cost-benefit. This topic was dealt with more broadly by Emerson (1972), who argues that people form and maintain relationships when they believe they will benefit from such relationships (in other words, when the benefits outweigh the costs). What an individual gives must be a cost; what they receive must be a benefit (Homans, 1958). Nye (1978) highlights nine SET propositions related to individual choices. The applicability of these propositions forms the basis of our article and, therefore, the results' analysis and discussion. The propositions are set out in Exhibit 1 below:

Exhibit 1. Propositions of the Social Exchange Theory

P1: Individuals seek to increase their rewards and avoid costs to maximize their welfare and earnings;

P2: When the costs are equal, individuals will choose the path that supplies the greatest rewards;

P3: When their rewards are equal, individuals will choose the path that exacts the lowest costs;

P4: If two paths bring equal and immediate rewards, individuals will choose the one that supplies the most enduring reward;

P5: If two paths bring long-term rewards perceived to be equal, individuals will choose the one that supplies the greatest short-term rewards;

P6: If two paths bring a perception of equivalent rewards and costs, individuals will choose the one that supplies the highest expectation of social approval, or at least the one that promises the least social rejection;

Continue

Exhibit 1. Propositions of the Social Exchange Theory

Concludes

P7: *If two paths bring a perception of equivalent rewards and costs, individuals will choose the one that provides the greatest degree of autonomy;*

P8: *If two paths bring a perception of equal rewards and costs, individuals will choose the one that brings the highest financial reward, or at least the one that involves the least financial expense;*

P9: *If two paths bring a perception of equivalent rewards and costs, individuals will choose the one whose stakeholders have values similar to their own in order to agree with these values, or at least rarely disagree about these values.*

Source: Nye (1978, p. 221).

People create relationships according to the social exchange theory. Emerson (1976) presented the first approach that deals with the financial aspects, arguing that there are economic exchange relationships, which are usually of short duration and involve concrete exchanges of work for financial reward. In a second approach, he mentions that there are longer-lasting social exchange relationships that involve the exchange of less tangible, more emotional or socio-emotional resources, such as recognition and esteem, which for certain people may be of more value in a social and emotional process than financial aspects.

For SET, the movement of interactions between individuals can occur by way of social ideas and material resources (Emerson, 1976). Cropanzano et al. (2017) develop this idea, pointing out that individuals make their decisions rationally in order to maximize positive experiences and minimize negative experiences through interactions. The benefits and costs of a social exchange cannot be thought of as economic or material results, but as an image of each person's values and desires (Blau, 1986; Mazza, 2007).

In terms of human behavior, sometimes individuals seem to be motivated to increase the occurrence of positive events in their lives, and to reduce the occurrence of negative events. To do so, they use social interactions, which in turn will have positive and negative results for those taking part (Weiss & Stevens, 1993). Human needs can therefore be organized into a hierarchy of human motives (Maslow, 1954). Thus, in descending order of complexity, needs are classified into physiological, safety, love/belonging, self-esteem, and self-actualization (Hesketh & Costa, 1980; Maslow, 1954).

Among these levels, we can relate, for example, those of esteem and self-actualization to the SET. Level of esteem refers to a person's need to: (a) achieve something in order to have competence, status, consideration, zeal, esteem, and appreciation; and (b) believe and "to be someone in the world" (Hesketh & Costa, 1980). Because certain activities are too complex to perform on our own, we need other people we can trust and be recognized by. For Lawler, Thye and Yoon (2000) the implicit or explicit task in return is to generate benefits for each individual through the exchange of goods or behaviors that agents cannot perform alone. In relation to human needs, another level linked to SET is that of self-actualization, or meta-motivation, which concerns the need for perfection, the need to develop one's full potential (Hesketh & Costa, 1980). SET is related to a social process, in which individuals seek to exchange material and/or immaterial resources, establishing a relationship of trust, so that their human needs are met (Emerson, 1972).

In the case of social exchange, the general law of reciprocity may apply, as individuals may be favorably predisposed towards others because they believe they will be treated reciprocally (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). A mutual exchange based on reciprocity is seen as a reductive exchange of the risk involved, and motivates reciprocal collaboration (Molm, 1994). As one party supplies benefits to the other, it is expected that those who receive the benefit will spontaneously return a benefit in order to satisfy the other party's particular need (Blau, 1986).

METHODS

To carry out this study we adopted a qualitative research approach with an interpretive epistemological paradigm, since the study seeks to understand reality through the object studied, and the outcome is based on the researchers' interpretation (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). We used one-to-one interviews based on a semi-structured script as the main source of data for the article. We established the following criteria, which were sometimes cumulative, for selecting our respondents. They needed to: (a) be a full-time faculty member in Master's or doctoral programs in the area of business administration; (b) have published internationally between 2011 and 2016; (c) have had experience in international scientific events in recent years; and (d) have worked as teaching faculty, or enrolled as a graduate student on courses abroad.

Based on these criteria, we conducted 39 interviews with professors from 15 graduate programs in the US and Brazil. We interviewed academics from the following business schools: Harvard University, MIT, Northeastern University, Boston College, Merrimack College, Bentley University, University of Georgia, Business Administration School of São Paulo, Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV EAESP), Brazilian School of Public and Business Administration, Fundação Getulio Vargas (FGV EBAPE), Institute of Education and Research (Insper), FEA-USP, COPPEAD Institute of Administration, The Federal University of *Rio de Janeiro* (Coppead-UFRJ) and Unisinos University (Unisinos).

The choice of location of the interviewees was a function of the different stages of the internationalization of the academic institutions, and also because all are in plural institutional contexts, thus offering, according to Creswell's (2003) precepts, a rich environment for increasing the power of generalization of the results and the applicability of the findings to other contexts. Some of our respondents work in New England, a place known for being cosmopolitan, where world-renowned universities are located, such as Harvard and MIT. The other respondents were academics working in Brazil, a relatively young nation on the international scientific stage, where, according to Elsevier (2018), less than 40% of professors are internationally mobile. Master's and PhD programs in Brazil began to increase in importance from the 1960s, and for this reason the country is still taking its first steps towards a more effective participation in international dialogue (Velloso, 2002).

As a criterion for selecting the sample, we initially chose educational institutions with a high level of internationalization. The institutions in the US are included in the Carnegie Foundation (2018) ranking of regional or global internationalization; in Brazil we selected institutions with some degree of internationalization, following the report published by Capes (2017), an organ linked to the Brazilian government, within the Ministry of Education. To conduct the interviews, we used a semi-structured script divided into three dimensions: (a) the respondents' scientific trajectory; (b) their perceptions of the concept of internationalization; and (c) their strategies and choices for international activities, based on the precepts of SET (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000).

The first stage of data collection was carried out in Brazil in 2016, while the second collection stage took place in the U.S. in 2018, and the third in Brazil in the first half of 2019. At the end of the last phase of the study, we interviewed 20 professors working in Brazil and 19 professors working in the U.S., a total of 39 interviewees. Of the total number of interviews, 24 were in person, 14 via Skype and one by phone. The average duration of the interviews was 50 minutes. In quoting respondents in our results section, we have used pseudonyms.

Our main intention in this phase was to compare points of convergence and divergence with regard to the internationalization of academics, according to the perceptions in relation to the SET propositions, thus increasing the internal validity of the research (Creswell, 2003). From the description of the phenomenon of the internationalization of academics and SET, we sought to discover patterns in the data and develop categories that

contribute conceptually. We compared the main categories that emerged from the codification with the theory to form new analytical perspectives, which served as the basis for our analysis of the set of propositions that comprise the SET, and for identifying possible weaknesses (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

FINDINGS

Individual rewards not handled by SET

From the interviews, we found that these academics expect different types of reward from their international activities. Aspects such as recognition and reputation are most frequently cited by the interviewees. They point out that when they publish their work internationally, they receive visibility and recognition from other academics, from educational institutions, from journal publishers, and also from the wider academic environment, according to the quotes from Chris, Jennifer and Jacob:

The reward accrues more to the individual than to the institution or in terms of money. [...] it's knowing that I'm being talked about, engaged, respected [...]. (Chris)

I think that reputation is the most important thing, for those who value an international reputation—to enter these circles—to be invited to conferences, to begin to be considered as someone and not just a silent voice. (Jennifer)

They're going to publish a study using my method. So, this will increase the visibility of my work. I think that's the main benefit for me. (Jacob)

In addition to recognition and reputation, the interviewees highlight that the learning gained from entering the academic world is another form of reward. They claim that publishing at the international level provides continuous learning, because discussion, research into new topics, and interaction with other academics generate a higher level of learning and networking. According to Ethan, Miguel, and Alexander:

This learning is continuous and comes from several sources. I can even learn by participating in PhD thesis committees. (Ethan)

I think learning from internationalization is essential, because it puts us on another level in terms of quality. (Miguel)

When you're a researcher, cultural differences are interesting; it's so much more of a learning opportunity. (Alexander)

The academics also highlighted that professional opportunities are themselves rewards of this process, because when publishing internationally they perceive opportunities for professional and academic advancement and participation in events, among other international professional opportunities. According to Anthony and Sandrine:

You have a better chance of advancing your career; more chances of moving to a better quality university; and more chances of being invited to go abroad to further develop your skills. (Anthony)

You can get support for international events; you can get support for proofreading and translation in the case for articles into English; and you can take sabbaticals. (Sandrine)

Finally, the academics cite personal satisfaction as an important reward for this process. They claim that this is an aspect that is related to personal rewards as it provides them with a feeling of personal fulfillment when they overcome the challenges posed by this type of activity and make decisions that they believe to be correct, especially in terms of doing what they like. The following quotes are from Leslie, James and Noah:

In terms of rewards, I would add the psychological. There's something about the personal benefits you get from doing something good. It's personal fulfillment. The benefit is something that you, as a researcher, have to pursue. (Leslie)

The rewards to me are seeing other places, which is something I value. And I meet people from many different places—another thing I really value. The reward to me is based on being exposed and seeing many different cultures and many different things around the world. And that I like. I like filling up my passport with stamps. (James)

At my university, this is what will give me the most points; I, too, will be more fulfilled. (Noah)

Thus, we see that individual rewards accrue from the research activity, both personally and professionally, and that they are related to issues that are both objective and subjective for each academic.

Benefits for third parties not envisioned by the SET

The second category of analysis refers to the benefits of going international. From the interviewees' statements, we see that there are individual benefits, but also collective benefits resulting from this process. When carrying out international activities, the academics state that they seek to contribute to other publics, such as their students and advisees, with the training of other academics, with educational institutions and organizations, with their area of activity, and with the country.

The main aspect of this category is the benefit that students and advisees derive. Many interviewees believe that by carrying out international activities they will help educate their students better by imbuing them with a global perspective. They also believe that they help steer them towards the international scenario, as highlighted by Benjamin, Alice, and Ethan:

Preparing our students better to do programs abroad. (Benjamin)

This path of development for university faculty obviously has a positive impact on the students you mentor—the doors you can open for these students. These international contacts I have, I've already made available to PhD students for research purposes. (Alice)

Every year a larger proportion of my students comes from abroad. And so, as I teach them and involve them in my research, I am necessarily thinking about education globally. (Ethan)

Another benefit stressed in the interviews refers to the contribution to the area of specialization of the academics. This is because through international publications, it is possible to expand dialogue and debate a given topic, which also helps the school advance internationally. In this regard, the quotes from Noah and Jayden are pertinent:

Being able to participate in a worldwide debate in your area and being one of the actors that makes your art progress instead of staying on the sidelines. Of course, several modalities that are considered internationalization derive from this, but you will only be able to do this activity if you are able to talk persuasively and advance your area internationally. (Noah)

Contributing to the school is a part of me. (Jayden)

In addition to the benefits for students, advisees, and the field of action, the interviewees highlighted the benefits for: (a) the education of other academics (when publications have a local impact, for example); (b) educational institutions and organizations (when the work benefits the institution and/or organization with which the interviewee is linked); and (c) the country (when the research is sufficiently comprehensive and therefore generates an impact on practice). Trish, Helena, and Alexander all spoke along these lines:

For me there's the issue of your thinking about the project of the institution, the organization in which you are inserted. (Trish)

Internationalization helps the educational institution in terms of internal evaluation and increases access to funding. (Helena)

It's part of my job to invest in the future of new researchers; it's a benefit to me and a benefit to (and from) the university. (Alexander)

So in addition to individual benefits for academics, the data indicate that there are also benefits for third parties from the activity of internationalization, ranging from students and advisees, to the educational institution itself, and even the country in which the academic works. This view is more comprehensive than the one initially proposed by SET.

Non-rational choices not envisaged by the SET

In addition to rational choices for internationalization, another factor identified as being responsible for the internationalization of academics is the coercion they endure from the educational institutions in which they work, which is motivated by their interest in obtaining high grades for their Master's degree and doctoral programs. Despite the coercion they are subjected to, the interviewees see that this process is necessary for the evolution

of the program in which they are working. This situation appears more frequently among Brazilian academics. The following are reports by Alexander, Arthur, and Elijah:

My rector has talked to me about going international; he has said that it although it's a goal of the university, it does not bind each individual. Each person chooses whether to do so or not, and the degree of internationalization they want to achieve. (Alexander)

Internationalization is increasingly relevant; it's becoming ever more important. So it's natural that there is pressure, a drive to getting published, towards looking at the foreign rankings. (Arthur)

There's pressure to publish a lot. (Elijah)

Other factors identified as non-rational choices are luck and opportunity. The interviewees say that luck plays a part in getting accepted by international publications without guidance from someone more experienced, and having one's career leveraged in the middle of a not very favorable scenario. They also report that as well as being diligent students, they had the opportunity to learn and grow in cultural, personal, and professional aspects, according to quotes from Robert, Aiden and Alexander:

I thought I needed to grow, and I got lucky. (Robert)

My first international activity was as a student. [...] for my Master's thesis, I had to do fieldwork. (Aiden)

I would say that the choice is one of opportunity. (Alexander)

The influence of family and choices made on impulse are also determining factors in this process, showing that they are not always strictly rational. Some academics interrupt their work overseas to work as academics in their country of origin and be geographically closer to their families. Choices taken on impulse also represent another aspect for internationalization, for example, because academics get involved in issues that they find personally and professionally appealing, but which render their choice irrational and unplanned. Ethan and Leslie's statements illustrate this reality:

When I left my PhD program, I had the option of staying there in the U.S. or there in the international market. Even my advisor wanted me to stay. My wife, however, really wanted to come back, wanted to return to Brazil; so then I left in search of schools that had a strong research orientation. (Ethan)

[...] I have an older brother who is a missionary; and when I was 18, I went to visit him. He was living in Romania. And that was my first international trip. (Leslie)

Another aspect that was mentioned in the interviews relates to the academics' curiosity. In fact, academics may believe that going outside the borders of their country of origin and going international is a charming challenge that will provide them with knowledge of new countries and cultures. Interviewees Aiden, William, and Rafael illustrate this point:

The focus on internationalization became a practice in the field, and then we asked ourselves, well, what does that mean? Why are we doing this? [...] so, what was driving me was curiosity much more than anything else. (Aiden)

Interest: I was always interested in understanding other countries better. (William)

There is a great cultural gain, because in fact I've already visited many countries. [...] traveling for various reasons—for research partnerships—especially congresses, workshops—things like that. [...] In terms of your cultural gain, it's a great positive experience. (Rafael)

The evidence makes it clear that the main justifications presented by the interviewees for their internationalization choices are not necessarily rational and planned, since in several situations internationalization seems to occur extrinsically and, in many cases, not in accordance with the academic's own will. This is yet another point that needs to be developed by SET.

The equivalence between rewards and costs envisioned by SET has its weaknesses

For the interviewees, many activities seem to generate overt different perceptions of cost-benefit. The time invested in writing for international publications and high-impact journals, for example, is greater than for local publications. Thus, projects that demand more time, dedication, and effort are correlated with high expectations of reward. An example of this expectation may be the personal cost to the individual that being far away from their family causes. Therefore, for some of the interviewees, when a publication at this level is rejected, the expected reward may not compensate for the cost incurred.

In addition to international publications, other activities that are carried out in an international context and that involve the academic's family become an emotional and financial cost that must be evaluated. This aspect is mentioned by Ethan, Alexander, and Lucas:

I get more points if I publish in an A1 journal, in the A1 tier. But the time you spend to publish, for you to publish in a top journal, is much more—let's be honest—than in any national journal. The national (Brazilian) journals have evolved a lot in quality, but the time required is much more if you make the calculation rationally. I mean, what you get there [...] I think it's not worthwhile, honestly. It's not worthwhile. (Ethan)

If I wanted to spend a year in any country, they would pay me to relocate my family for a year so I could work there. So it's an incentive in that regard. (Alexander)

The advantage is that my work is well known abroad, and for the department this is important. [...] And I sell more books, too; so I have to leave my wife behind (she occasionally goes with me but usually, she's unable to). And we have dogs too, so I miss them. (Lucas)

In addition to the personal costs that involve their family members, there are financial and mental costs. Resilience becomes an important skill for academics so they do not become discouraged, and focus instead on

dealing with these costs, often keeping in mind the rewards that will come from each activity. As [Peseta, Barrie and Mclean \(2017\)](#) have already pointed out, “academic life is a peculiar kind of difficult work” (p. 453), which demands resilience on the part of academics, sometimes due to the high intellectual demands of their professions, and sometimes due to the devaluation of their work in certain contexts. For other academics, the rejection of their papers at the top international level is a way of learning how to evolve in their research. Lucas and Sandrine made a similar point:

An important journal at the international level, whatever the area, will have a rejection rate of 90% or 95%. Therefore, if you want to be among the 5% or 10% accepted, you’ll have to work hard. All of my initial articles were rejected; all of them, and with really negative comments. But that wasn’t the end because I worked and worked and worked. I kept trying and eventually I got accepted. (Lucas)

In a submission to an international journal, if you get a “desk reject” (which is quick—around 15 days or a month), you have your answer: your paper is not a good fit for that journal. Then you can work on it and send it to another one, in which case it may be sent out for a long review. (Sandrine)

Costs and rewards, therefore, may vary according to the time and dedication given to each project. Each academic will also choose and evaluate differently, depending on whether their activities are achieving the expected and desired reward. Just as the costs involved are not only financial, but emotional, physical, and mental, so are the rewards.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this article was to describe and analyze the internationalization of business schools based on the activities of academics and the propositions defended by the Social Exchange Theory (SET). We identified that there are theoretical assumptions that can be adapted and/or complemented by SET for explaining the phenomenon of internationalization, and this was the main contribution of our article.

In our first category of analysis, individual rewards, SET highlights the financial aspect as a relevant reward ([Blau, 1986](#); [Emerson, 1976](#); [Nye, 1978](#)). We extend this assumption, showing that, based on the results of the interviews, some individual rewards are not addressed by SET. The interviewees seek rewards other than merely financial, such as learning, recognition, reputation, networking, professional opportunities, and personal satisfaction.

The studies by [Homans \(1958\)](#) and [Mazza \(2007\)](#) point to this evidence, observing that: (a) the benefits and costs are thought of in terms of an image of the values and desires of each person; and (b) some social exchanges entail obligations that cannot be exactly explained and negotiated. Rewards may include pleasure, satisfaction, gratification, and the fulfillment of needs. Thus, when seeking internationalization, academics make tradeoffs in which they are rewarded with material benefits and social and non-monetary values.

With regard to the second category, that is, the existence of benefits for third parties that are not contemplated by the SET, [Nye \(1978\)](#) states that SET is primarily concerned with self-interest and that individuals have a combination of economic and psychological needs. [Homans \(1958\)](#) and [Emerson \(1972\)](#) also stress this proposition when they say that people form and maintain relationships when they believe they will benefit from

them. Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) point out that SET is a search for reciprocity, and that relationships are governed by collective gain. The interviews reinforce this argument, as the benefits are not only for the international academic at the individual level. Indeed, they also work collaboratively, to the benefit of students, advisees, other academics, educational institutions, organizations, countries, and areas of activity. Academics, therefore, do not seek internationalization merely for their own benefit.

Furthermore, the data reveal that there are choices of a non-rational character that are not envisaged by SET, a result that diverges, to some degree, from the claims of Nye (1978) and Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005), who believe that the choices academics make to go international are substantially rational. According to the criticisms of Zafirovski (2005) in relation to the theory, and also from the interviews, we found that several other factors drive academics in the direction of internationalization, such as luck, curiosity, impulse, family issues, and institutional pressures, a result that converges with the study of Majee and Ress (2018).

Finally, Nye (1978) uses the SET to address the possibility of frequent equivalence between the rewards and costs of certain activities. However—and bolstering our phenomenon—the interviewees claimed that international activities result in measurably different costs and rewards. As Agnew (2013) and Leask (2013) point out, the professor's field of study will also influence the cost-benefit ratio of his/her internationalization process. In the case of business schools, for example, it is more common for professors in the area of company internationalization to pursue their own career internationalization than professors in other disciplines. Another example is the submission of articles to top international journals, which generates critical and rigorous feedback from the editors and reviewers of these journals, and contributes to the learning process of the academics involved, especially when an article is rejected. Exhibit 2 provides a summary of the characteristics of the SET and its opportunities:

Exhibit 2. Weaknesses of the Social Exchange Theory and complementary opportunities

SET summary	Weaknesses and opportunities according to interviewees
The rewards resulting from the activities of individuals are measurable and relatively predictable (Nye 1978).	The rewards of complex activities are not easily measurable and predictable: <i>“this learning is continuous and comes from several sources. I can even learn by participating in PhD thesis committees.” (Ethan)</i>
Individuals make their choices based on their individual interests (Nye 1978).	Individuals often make their decisions based on benefits to third parties, which go beyond their individual benefits: <i>“it’s part of my job to invest in the future of new researchers; it’s a benefit to me and a benefit to (and from) the university.” (Alexander)</i>
Individuals make their decisions rationally (Nye 1978).	Individuals often make decisions based on criteria such as intuition, emotion, and institutional pressures: <i>“I consider what I’m interested in and passionate about first. If I’m not passionate about the project, I won’t have the strength to go through with it.” (Leslie)</i>
Individuals must decide between a series of alternatives with equivalent rewards and costs (Nye 1978).	Individuals often decide between alternatives that, despite having an apparently advantageous cost-benefit, provide very different rewards and costs, and therefore are not equivalent: <i>“so it depends a lot on the attitude of the person, who knows they want to try this and goes after it and has to be resilient because it’s an activity where you’ll get mostly rejects [...]” (Noah)</i>

This article also has some limitations, among which we highlight the need to investigate the application of SET in other fields of knowledge, given the scarcity of its use in research dealing specifically with the context of education. This is also an opportunity for future studies, however, and we underline the need for interdisciplinary research into the applicability of the social exchange theory, since it is a classic, albeit current theory, in the field of applied social sciences. More broadly, during our study we identified the need for more theoretical research into the major theme of the internationalization of higher education. Such studies could, for example, continue with our effort to understand the perceptions of academics from different countries.

For our study we selected a sample of academics who are heavily involved in internationalization activities. We suggest future studies should analyze the perceptions of academics who are at the beginning of this international trajectory, and of those who do not seek to go international. These investigations would result in different points of view that would be useful for a better understanding of this phenomenon.

REFERENCES

- Agnew, M. (2013). *Strategic planning: An examination of the role of disciplines in sustaining internationalization of the university*. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 17(2), 183-202. doi: 10.1177/1028315312464655
- Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). *The internationalization of higher education: Motivations and realities*. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 11(3-4), 290-305. doi: 10.1177/1028315307303542
- Batista, M. P., & Romani-Dias, M. (2021). *AACSB international accreditation as a catalyst for soft skills in business schools*. *Journal of Education for Business*, 1-7. doi: 10.1080/08832323.2021.1924105
- Blau, P. (1986). *Exchange and power in social life* (5. ed.). New Brunswick and London, UK: Transaction Publishers.
- British Council. (2018). *Universidades para o mundo: Desafios e oportunidades para a internacionalização*. Retrieved from <https://www.britishcouncil.org.br/atividades/educacao/internacionalizacao/universidades-para-o-mundo>
- Capes. (2017). *Resultado da avaliação quadrienal*. Retrieved from <http://avaliacaoquadrienal.capes.gov.br/resultado-da-avaliacao-quadrienal-2017-2>
- Carnegie Foundation. (2018). *Standard listings*. Retrieved from <http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/listings.php>
- Carneiro, J., Bandeira-de-Mello, R., Cuervo-Cazurra, A., Gonzalez-Perez, M. A., Olivas-Luján, M., Parente, R., & Xavier, W. (2015). Doing research and publishing on Latin America. In: Newbury, W. & Gonzalez-Perez, M.A. (Eds.) *International Business in Latin America: Innovation, Geography and Internationalization* (pp. 11-46). doi:10.1057/9781137409
- Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage.
- Criswell, J. R. (2014). *Faculty internationalization perceptions survey: Development and validation*. University of Missouri-Columbia. Retrieved from <https://mospace.library.umsystem.edu/xmlui/handle/10355/44158>
- Cropanzano, R., Anthony, E, Daniels, S., & Hall, A. (2017). *Social exchange theory: A critical review with theoretical remedies*. *Academy of Management Annals*, 11(1), 479-516. doi: 10.5465/annals.2015.0099
- Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. (2005). *Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review*. *Journal of management*, 31(6), 874-900. doi: 10.1177/0149206305279602
- Dewey, P., & Duff, S. (2009). *Reason before passion: Faculty views on internationalization in higher education*. *Higher Education*, 58(4), 491-504. doi: 10.1007/s10734-009-9207-z
- Elsevier. (2018). *Gender in the global research landscape*. Retrieved from https://www.elsevier.com/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/265661/ElsevierGenderReport_final_for-web.pdf
- Emerson, R. (1972). *Exchange theory*. Part II: Exchange relations and network structures. In J. Berger, M. Zelditch, Jr., & B. Anderson (Eds.), *Sociological theories in progress* (Vol. 2, pp. 38-87). Boston, MA, USA: Houghton Mifflin.
- Emerson, R. (1976). *Social exchange theory*. *Annual Review of Sociology*, 2(1), 335-362. doi: 10.1146/annurev.50.02.080176.002003

- Gu, Q., Schweisfurth, M., & Day, C. (2010). Learning and growing in a 'foreign' context: Intercultural experiences of international students. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 40(1), 7-23. doi: 10.1080/03057920903115983
- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 191-215). Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: Sage.
- Hesketh, J., & Costa, M. (1980). Construção de um instrumento para medida de satisfação no trabalho. *RAE-Revista de Administração de Empresas*, 20(3), 59-68. doi: 10.1590/S0034-75901980000300005
- Homans, G. C. (1958). Social behavior as exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 63(6), 597-606. doi:10.1086/222355
- Hotcourses. (2019). *Hotcourses diversity index*. Retrieved from <https://www.hotcourses.com.br/study/rankings/hdi.html?country=uk&scrollpos=720#>
- Kerlinger, F., & Lee, H. (2000). *Survey research: Foundations of behavioral research*. Orlando, USA: Harcourt.
- Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization remodeled: Definition, approaches, and rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8(1), 5-31. doi:10.1177/1028315303260832
- Knight, J. (2008). The internationalization of higher education: Are we on the right track? *Academic Matters*, Oct-Nov, 5-9
- Lawler, E., Thye, S., & Yoon, J. (2000). Emotion and group cohesion in productive exchange. *American Journal of Sociology*, 106(3), 616-57. doi:10.1086/318965
- Lazarini, S. G. (2012). Leveraging the competitive advantage of Iberoamerican scholars. *Management Research: The Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management*, 10(1), 64-73. doi: 10.1108/1536-541211228577
- Leask, B. (2013). Internationalizing the curriculum in the disciplines: Imagining new possibilities. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 17(2), 103-118. doi: 10.1177/1028315312475090
- Majee, U., & Ress, S. (2018). Colonial legacies in internationalisation of higher education: Racial justice and geopolitical redress in South Africa and Brazil. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 50(4), 463-481. doi: 10.1080/03057925.2018.1521264
- Maslow, A. (1954). *Motivation and personality*. New York, USA: Harper.
- Mazenod, A. (2018). Lost in translation? Comparative education research and the production of academic knowledge. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 48(2), 189-205. doi: 10.1080/03057925.2017.1297696
- Mazza, A. (2007). *As relações interpessoais em encontros de serviço: Uma abordagem à luz da teoria das trocas sociais* (Dissertação, Universidade Estadual do Ceará, Fortaleza, CE).
- Molm, L. (1994). Dependence and risk: Transforming the structure of social exchange. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 57(3), 163-176. doi: 10.2307/2786874
- Nye, F. (1978). Is choice and exchange theory the key? *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 40(2), 219-233. doi: 10.2307/350754
- Peseta, T., Barrie, S., & Mclean, J. (2017) Academic life in the measured university: Pleasures, paradoxes and politics. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(3), 453-457. doi: 10.1080/07294360.2017.1293909
- Proctor, D. (2016). *Academic staff and international engagement: Motivations and drivers in Australian higher education* (PhD, University of Melbourne, Australia). Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11343/145395>
- Ramos, M. (2018). Internacionalização da pós-graduação no Brasil: Lógica e mecanismos. *Educação e Pesquisa*, 44. doi:10.1590/s1517-9702201706161579
- Romani-Dias, M., Carneiro, J., & dos Santos Barbosa, A. (2019). Internationalization of higher education institutions: the underestimated role of faculty. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 33(2), 300-316. doi: 10.1108/IJEM-07-2017-0184
- Romani-Dias, M., & Carneiro, J. (2020). Internationalization in higher education: faculty tradeoffs under the social exchange theory. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 34(3), 461-476. doi: 10.1108/IJEM-04-2019-0142
- Sanderson, G. (2008). A foundation for the internationalization of the academic self. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(3), 276-307. doi:10.1177/1028315307299420
- Santin, D. (2016). Internacionalização da produção científica brasileira: Políticas, estratégias e medidas de avaliação. *Revista Brasileira de Pós-Graduação (RBPG)*, 13(30), 81-100. doi:10.21713/2358-2332.2016.v13.923
- Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA, USA: Sage.
- Teekens, H. (2004). Internationalisation at home. In B. Wächter (Ed.), *Higher education in a changing environment: Internationalisation of higher education policy in Europe* (pp 57-66). Bonn, Germany: Lemmens.
- Tran, L., & Pham, L. (2016). International students in transnational mobility: Intercultural connectedness with domestic and international peers, institutions and the wider community. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 46(4), 560-581. doi:10.1080/03057925.2015.1057479
- Velloso, J. (2002). *Pós-graduação no Brasil: Formação e trabalho de mestres e doutores no país*. Brasília, DF: Capes/Unesco.

- Weiss, M., & Stevens, C. (1993). Motivation and attrition of female coaches: An application of social exchange theory. *The Sport Psychologist*, 7(3), 244-261. doi:10.1123/tsp.7.3.244
- Wit, H. De. (2020). Internationalization of higher education. *Journal of International Students*, 10(1), 1-4. doi: 10.32674/jis.v10i1.1893
- Woldegiyorgis, A. A., Proctor, D., & Wit, H. de. (2018). Internationalization of research: Key considerations and concerns. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 22(2), 161-176. doi: 10.1177/1028315318762804
- Wu, H. (2018). China's international student recruitment as 'outward-oriented' higher education internationalization: An exploratory empirical inquiry. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 49(4), 619-634. doi:10.1080/03057925.2018.1444469
- Zafirovski, M. (2005). Social Exchange Theory under scrutiny: A positive critique of its economic-behaviorist formulations. *Electronic Journal of Sociology*, 2(2), 1-40. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.454.7467&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Marcello Romani-Dias, Angela Maria Scroccaro Biasoli, Jorge Carneiro, and Aline dos Santos Barbosa worked on the conceptualization and theoretical-methodological approach. Marcello Romani-Dias, Angela Maria Scroccaro Biasoli, Jorge Carneiro, and Aline dos Santos Barbosa worked on the theoretical review of the article. Marcello Romani-Dias and Angela Maria Scroccaro Biasoli coordinated data collection. Marcello Romani-Dias, Angela Maria Scroccaro Biasoli, Jorge Carneiro and Aline dos Santos Barbosa participated in the data analysis. Marcello Romani-Dias and Angela Maria Scroccaro Biasoli participated in the writing and final review of the manuscript.