ARTIGOS

Student mobility of college students from former public high schools: experiences within the Science without Borders Program [1, 2, 3, 4]

Mobilidade estudantil de universitários oriundos do ensino médio público: experiências com o programa Ciência sem Fronteiras

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Abstract

The internationalization of higher education is a marker of universities in the contemporary world. In this process, academic mobility programs are central, representing the most visible aspect of internationalization. This article analyzes the academic mobility of students from the Science without Borders program who have studied in public high schools, especially the access of the students to the program, their international experiences, and projects for the future. The empirical research, carried out in a public university in the Midwest region of Brazil, consisted of two surveys and group discussions analyzed through the Documentary Method. Based on the results, we identified that social origin and school capital are dimensions that can hinder or deprive the participation of students from less favored classes in the access to student mobility programs. However, for students who were able to overcome these barriers, the contribution of the international experience goes beyond academic conquers and offers opportunities for the development of new projects for the future, both in the personal and professional fields.

Keywords: academic mobility, public school, group discussion, Documentary Method

Resumo

A internacionalização da educação superior é uma marca das universidades no mundo contemporâneo. Nesse processo, programas voltados à mobilidade acadêmica recebem centralidade, representando a faceta mais visível da internacionalização. O presente artigo analisa a mobilidade acadêmica de estudantes oriundos do ensino médio público no âmbito do programa Ciência sem Fronteiras, trazendo para a discussão o acesso ao programa, a experiência internacional e os projetos de futuro. A pesquisa foi conduzida em uma universidade pública da Região Centro-Oeste e consistiu na aplicação de dois surveys e na realização de grupos de discussão que foram analisados à luz do Método Documentário. Com base nos resultados, identificamos que a origem social e o capital escolar são dimensões que podem dificultar ou privar o acesso de estudantes de classes menos favorecidas em programas de mobilidade estudantil. Quando as barreiras são rompidas, as contribuições da experiência internacional ultrapassam os ganhos acadêmicos, possibilitando a abertura para novos projetos de futuro, tanto no campo pessoal quanto profissional.

Palavras-chave: *mobilidade acadêmica, escola pública, grupos de discussão, Método Documentário*

Introduction

The internationalization of higher education, a phenomenon that intensified with the globalization process that was accelerated in the last decades of the 20th century (Morosini, 2006; Morosini & Corte, 2018), is a strong characteristic of contemporary universities. Santos & Almeida Filho (2012) consider this to be the fourth mission of the university, along with the other three: teaching, research, and extension. Defining what internationalization is represents a complex task, as there is not a universal concept that explains different realities, interests, objectives, and subjects, representing distinct things for different contexts and actors (Knight, 2004). In an attempt to understand it, despite the conceptual imprecision, Knight (2004, pp. 11) refers to internationalization as "the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education."

Since the 1990s, the internationalization of higher education has been guided by logics of excellence focused on a good position in the global education market and attested by rankings (De Wit, 2019; Khomyakov et al., 2020). In this regard, F. Leal et al. (2018) highlight the reductionist dimension of international and national rankings when assessing the internationalization of higher education institutions, as they do not address the complexity and different aspects, practices and strategies of this phenomenon. Not opposed to rankings, but seeking to build other definitions of excellence and recognition of universities in the global academia, De Wit (2020) proposes a more qualitative, ethical, and inclusive approach to internationalization, emphasizing that such process must involve all subjects of the institution and help improve educational quality and society.

Other authors highlight the importance of an international profile of students and teachers that can handle global challenges and cultural diversity, not forgetting the most urgent problems in their own countries (Gacel-Ávila & Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2018). In this sense, it is "necessary to find a suitable balance between the orientation towards international standards and national or regional commitment of the higher education institution" (Khomyakov et al., 2020, pp. 127).

Among the internationalization strategies adopted by the global academia, academic mobility is central to this process (Castro & Cabral, 2012; Guilherme et al., 2016; Morosini & Corte, 2018). It refers to voluntary move of students, professors or researchers to another higher education institution outside their country of origin to take courses, conduct research or have a degree abroad at different levels of training (De Wit, 2014; Iesalc, 2019). Castro and Cabral (2012, pp. 77) go further in this definition and emphasize that academic mobility "is much broader, as it is social and involves structures, means, cultures and meanings."

This internationalization strategy has grown significantly in the 21st century. In ten years (2000–2010), this number increased from 2.1 to 4.1 million and, in 2017, to 5 million students in mobility (De Wit, 2014; Iesalc, 2019). In Latin America, although the number of students who participated in academic mobility programs between 2012 and 2017 did not grow significantly when compared to other regions of the world[5], 97% of the internationalization

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[5] According to Iesalc (2019), in the global context (2012 to 2017), the number of students who participated in academic mobility programs increased from 4 to 5 million. In the same period, the number of students in mobility in Latin America increased from 258,000 to 312,000.

programs of universities were focused on academic mobility of professors and students (Gacel-Ávila & Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2018; Unesco, 2017).

Unquestionably, the most important academic mobility policy created by the Brazilian government was the Science without Borders Program (CsF - Ciência sem Fronteiras), in force between 2011 and 2016 (Manços & Coelho, 2017; Prolo et al., 2019). Aiming to "promote the consolidation, expansion, and internationalization of science and technology, innovation and Brazilian competitiveness through exchange and international mobility" (Ciências Sem Fronteiras, n. d.), the Presidency of the Republic, through Decree nº 7642 of December 13, 2011, created this program to grant degree and research scholarships abroad at the following levels and categories: sandwich degree, master's degree, sandwich Ph.D., full Ph.D., post doctorate, special visiting researcher, and young talent attraction. University student mobility had special attention under the CsF, with 73,341 scholarships granted to university students out of a total of 93,247 scholarships distributed in the period (Ciências Sem Fronteiras, n. d.)[6].

The CsF was developed to meet specific areas of knowledge, especially the engineering, exact, natural and health sciences, and not for the internationalization of Brazilian universities as a whole, which was a reason for criticism, especially in the field of human and social sciences (Chaves & Castro, 2016). Low proficiency in foreign languages of scholarship holders and the previous absence of a language policy in the country to achieve the objectives of international academic mobility programs are among the aspects that generated further questioning (Archanjo, 2015). In addition, the huge public investment in scholarships abroad and the lack of systematic evaluations of the program also generated debates in civil society and the academia (Granja & Carneiro, 2021).

Despite the criticisms regarding CsF planning, implementation and evaluation, the program significantly contributed to the internationalization of Brazilian higher education, increasing the visibility of Brazilian universities, establishing partnerships and scientific collaboration, and supporting Brazilian universities in their strategic internationalization plans. Later, other internationalization proposals were developed, such as the Capes-Print Program (F. Leal, 2019; Manços & Coelho, 2017; Prolo et al., 2019), partially due to the lack of autonomy of universities under the CsF. So far, the CsF is one of the few exchange opportunities offered on a large scale to Brazilian undergraduate students, given the poor incentive and low investment

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[6] Note: Data updated in December 2015.

in international academic mobility for this level of education when compared to graduate students (Neves & Barbosa, 2020).

Considering the centrality of undergraduate courses in the CsF program, this study analyzes the academic mobility of students from public high schools, discussing the access to the program, international experience, and projects for the future. The first part explains why this group of students was selected, the context in which the study was carried out, the methods of the analysis (group discussion and documentary method), and the theoretical and methodological framework that guided the interpretation of qualitative data. The second part analyzes data from two group discussion with university students from public high schools who participated in the CsF program. In the last section, we present some considerations about the obstacles found by young people from disadvantaged groups in academic mobility.

Study phases

Seeking to understand the contribution of exchange programs for undergraduate students in the areas of knowledge covered by the CsF program and to learn about the experiences of cultural exchange and the relationships established between the country of origin and the country of exchange, we conducted a study from 2014 to 2017 titled "Generation without Borders: experiences of international exchange of young university students," which was supported by CNPq[7]. The first phase consisted of a survey sent to all CsF scholarship students from a public university in the Central West Region of Brazil (2,117 in total); around 30% (672 students) answered the survey – 334 male and 338 female students. In this group, the number of 94 students (13.9%) who had come from public high schools caught our attention.

Although studies about academic mobility have reported obstacles for student exchange abroad are mainly related to financial issues (C. Leal & Ramos, 2013), few studies have analyzed students with a scholarship but no additional financial support from their families. Considering that, in our sample, 13.9% of the respondents had studied in public schools, which a priori does not define the socioeconomic situation of their families, we identified the need to continue the

study and address aspects including the following: What type of public high school did these young people attend? Did school and family background have any influence on the participation of these students in the CsF program? How was their access to the program? How was their exchange experience and how did the international experience contribute to their professional perspectives and projects for the future?

In this respect, the analysis of data from the first phase of this study supported the development of a new survey[8] with questions about the school and family background of the scholarship holders from public schools. Among the results regarding public high school, most scholarship students (63.22%) were from public schools in the States of the Central West Region, who attended day classes, followed by those who studied at the Military School located in the region where the university is located (33.33%), and students who had attended high school at a Federal Center for Technological Education or Federal Institute of Education, accounting for 3.45% of the students. An important fact based on our second survey was that our initial hypothesis that most scholarship holders would come from the Military School or from one of the Federal Institutes located in the region was not confirmed.

The results of the second survey highlighted the importance of continuing our study with these students, seeking to analyze other dimensions of the exchange experience, which could only be done with a qualitative study. Then, in the third phase of the study, we chose to conduct group discussions with former scholarship students of the CsF who had previously provided their personal contact information (email and telephone). The selection criteria considered the type of high school (regular public school and military school) the student had attended and the student gender. Four group discussion were organized: one with female participants and three with male participants.

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[8] To conduct this study phase, a new questionnaire was created and uploaded to the LimeSurvey Platform and sent to 2,117 scholarship students from a university in the Central West Region in Brazil. The survey was answered by 87 students (38 female and 49 male students), who met the requirement of being a student from a public high school.

Theoretical-methodological procedures: group discussion and documentary method

Group discussion, a procedure that has been widely used in studies with young people since the 1980s (Weller, 2006, 2019), provide access to conjunctive experiences and implicit knowledge shared by a group. "Spaces of conjunctive experience" are understood as common experiences that link a certain group of individuals (Bohnsack, 2020). In this investigation, school origin in high school and participation in the CsF program are spaces of conjunctive experiences shared by these young people.

For these group discussions, we elaborate a question guide considering some principles developed by Bohnsack for conducting group discussion (Bohnsack, 2020; Weller, 2006, 2019). This guide included questions about the school and academic trajectory in Brazil, the exchange experience abroad, the return to Brazil, the end of the CsF program, projects for the future, and other issues the group wanted to discuss.

The group discussion were analyzed based on the documentary method, a concept coined by Mannheim (1971) and maintained by Bohnsack in the 1980s when the author discussed the Mannheim's theory on the sociology of knowledge and, based on it, developed a method of empirical data analysis (Bohnsack, 2014, 2017, 2020)[9]. As reported by Bohnsack (2014, pp. 217), Mannheim developed "the first comprehensive argument for a particular approach to observation in the social sciences, which even today is able to meet the requirements of epistemological reasoning." For Mannheim (1971), three types of meanings can be identified in everyday activities. For example, in the gesture of a person giving alms to a beggar, an immanent or objective level of meaning is observed, which is given, that is, which can be interpreted immediately; an expressive level of meaning, which is conveyed by words or actions and requires the knowledge of involved actors to be interpreted; and finally a documentary level, which documents practical action, requiring the interpretation process to involve the position of the one who is interpreting the observed action.

In addition to defining these three levels of interpretation, Mannheim (1982) emphasizes that understanding the documentary level occurs only through the development of a

[9] Ethnomethodology, Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture, and Erving Panofsky's iconology were also important for the development of this procedure, while Panofsky's contribution was significant for the adaptation of the documentary method for image analysis.

sociogenetic attitude in the process of interpretation. This attitude is one of the most important components of the documentary method and assumes an analytical change that, instead of asking *what* a social reality is, will seek to analyze *how* it is constituted (Bohnsack, 2020; Weller, 2019).

In the process of adapting the documentary method to reconstructive social research and in order to offer an analytical tool for the reconstruction of collective orientation of participants of a group discussion, Bohnsack (2014, 2020) proposed four stages of analysis: formulating interpretation, reflecting interpretation, comparative analysis, and type construction.

The first stage – formulating interpretation – reconstructs the colloquial language and turns it into a language that is understandable to those who are not part of the investigated environment. Reflecting interpretation, on the other hand, focuses on the organization of the discourse and the way participants interact, for example: the way they refer to each other, considering the dramaturgy and the density of the discourse. Reconstructions of the way participants interact or how the participants organize the discourse are very important, as they reveal the extension to which the members of a group share a space of conjunctive experiences and specific collective orientations of the social environment (Bohnsack, 2014). The third stage – comparative analysis – starts during the fieldwork, when the researcher sets criteria for the selection of the participants for the group discussions, which, as in the grounded theory and the documentary method, is based on the procedure defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as theoretical sampling (Weller, 2019). This pre-selection allows searching for homologous or divergent patterns, for example, among CsF students coming from public schools.

Comparative analysis within the documentary method is, from the beginning, extremely important, since the orientation framework of a certain group or social environment can only be analyzed when contrasted with other comparative horizons in the process of interpretation. Finally, Bohnsack (2020) proposes type construction as the last stage of the documentary method, which seeks to analyze, with an abductive approach, the genesis of an orientation framework and in what circumstances it is considered as typical[10].

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[10] In the scope of this article, it was not possible to present in detail the different stages of analysis of the documentary method. For a deeper understanding of this topic, please check the references about the documentary method in Portuguese and English at the end of the book "Reconstructive Social Research" (Bohnsack, 2020, pp. 403-412).

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It is important to highlight that the documentary method, just as the grounded theory, comprises a group of qualitative data analysis procedures called reconstructive methods (Bohnsack, 2020). Reconstructive qualitative research considers the empirical field as a privileged space for the construction of new knowledge and the generation of theories based on empirical evidence, which will be developed mainly from the comparison between empirical cases, that is, through a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Based on this orientation, the researcher does not go to fieldwork with pre-established hypotheses, as new knowledge will be generated in the empirical field.

Analysis of group discussion according to the documentary method

Based on the documentary method and the procedure defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as theoretical sampling, the selection criteria for group discussion participants were the following: female or male student from a public school or a military school. Although we had data from four group discussions , we will present the analysis of only two groups – one female group and one male group – within the scope of this article. The selection of these two groups was based on the completion of basic education in public schools linked with state schools in the Central West Region and the female group was selected to check for significant differences in terms of gender and academic mobility. Finally, the interaction of participants and a deeper analysis of proposed themes during the discussion were also considered when selecting these two groups.

Before proceeding to data analysis, the participants of the female and male groups will be introduced, considering these data assume significant importance in understanding the meaning of exchange for students from public high schools.

The female group *It's cultural*[11] had two participants, Sofia[12] (26 years old) and Laura (25 years old). Laura is the daughter of a teacher and a military police officer, both with complete

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[11] The names of the groups, *It's cultural* and *Out of the box*, are metaphors representing their respective focus, that is, the common points that presented interaction density among the participants of the discussion group (Bonhsack, 2020).

[12] Every participant of the discussion groups received a fictitious name.

higher education. She studied at public schools only. Laura reported she was always encouraged to study and emphasized the efforts of her parents to fill gaps in the public school education through tutoring and help with school assignments. Sofia attended a private school in her childhood education, and public schools for elementary and high school education. Her parents finished higher education courses – her mother is a nurse and her father is a military police officer. Unlike Laura, Sofia highlighted the role of teachers in high school, who encouraged her to go to a public university.

The participants were admitted to the university through the traditional admission exam, Sofia studied civil engineering (daytime course) and Laura studied natural sciences (daytime course). Laura's transition from basic education to higher education was seen as a natural path, expected by her family, as her brother had also gone to the same federal institution she wanted to study. Her university admission was celebrated with a trip across South America. Sofia highlighted that she was encouraged by her parents, but did not provide details about it. Sofia's first CsF international trip was to Italy and Laura went to Germany.

The male group *Out of the box* also had two participants: Guadaci (23 years old) and Tino (23 years old). Guadaci's father finished high school and is a broker. His mother finished higher education and is a nurse. Guadaci studied in private kindergarten and elementary schools and then he attended a public high school. Guadaci's experience in a public high school is compared to the private schools he attended in his early school trajectory. For him, the quality of education and the evaluation system of the public school is inferior to that of the private sector.

Tino's mother is a teacher and finished higher education; his father finished high school and works for the Correios, a state-owned company that operates the national postal service. Most of Tino's basic education (elementary and high school) was in public schools. Tino reported gaps in public education, such as the lack of teachers and certain skepticism of students regarding admission to a public university. Unlike Guadaci's perspective, Tino sees the public school as a place to experience different social realities and understand the value of help – of being helped and helping others – and highlights the importance of human training in this stage of basic education.

To fill the gaps in school education, Tino and Guadaci took preparatory courses during high school, an educational strategy that was financially supported by their parents. They reported that studying at a public university was an obligation, to continue the legacy left by

their brothers and sisters, who had also studied at public universities. Guadaci was admitted to the computer engineering course (daytime) through the traditional university admission exam and traveled to the United States of America in the exchange program. Tino was approved through the traditional exam with racial quotas and studied dentistry (daytime course), and he went to Germany in the CsF program. Both participants had never made international trips before the academic mobility program.

Based on this brief presentation of the school trajectory and family of participants, some considerations are made about the school experience of *It's cultural* and *Out of the Box* groups: a) investment in preparatory courses for university admission and school tutoring classes; b) some skepticism of students in relation to public high schools, even when they have studied in such schools; and c) support and inspiration from the family and teachers to develop a public university admission project. For these young people, studying at a university represented a project of continuity in the educational trajectory started by their parents or brothers or sisters, who had studied in higher education institutions. Of particular note, the students received encouragement, which was translated into preparatory courses and school tutoring, and felt they had an 'obligation' to continue a family educational project.

Following the analysis stages of the documentary method, we initially performed a thematic division in order to identify the themes and the discussion time. Then, we transcribed and coded the speeches, indicating pauses, laughs, emphatic or loud words, among other discourse markers. Therefore, the coding system used in the presentation of the groups does not follow the orthographic norms, but the codes developed under the documentary method[13]. Finally, we selected the excerpts that were submitted to the formulating, reflecting, and comparative analysis[14] and which will be presented below: access to the Science without Borders program, exchange experience abroad, and projects for the future after graduation.

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[13] Main codes used: (.) short pause; (2) pause and duration time; ⌞ speech that started before the conclusion of another participant's speech; ; (semicolon = slight decrease in the tone of voice); . (dot = strong decrease in the tone of voice); , (comma = slight increase in the tone of voice); ? (question mark = strong increase in the tone of voice); exem- (word cut); so=so (pronunciation in a joined form); example or *example* (emphatic pronunciation); **example** or EXAMPLE (pronunciation in a loud voice); °example° (pronunciation in a low voice); (example) = word or phrase in parentheses were not fully understood); @example@ (pronunciation with laughs). For more details, see Weller (2006) and Bohnsack (2020).

[14] In this study, considering the fact that we conducted only four group discussions, it was not possible to perform type construction, the last stage of the documentary method.

As mentioned above, the documentary method is situated in the field of reconstructive social research, which presumes an analysis from the empirical perspective and not based on a comparison with theoretical references or results of other studies about the topic. In this sense, while analyzing the excerpts of group discussion, we sought to reconstruct the collective orientation regarding the topics discussed from the speeches of the participants, analyzing not only *what* they narrated about their experiences, but mainly *how* they were narrated. However, this does not mean the documentary method can be separated from the analysis of the existing literature about the subject, which will be discussed later.

Interest in the Science without Borders program

Spending some time abroad to take a course, learn a new language or conduct a research project is still not within the reach of most Brazilian university students. Many scholarship holders, even those who attended private high school and who, in theory, belonged to higher social classes, had not traveled abroad before the CsF exchange program. In our first survey, 84.4% of respondents reported that they had never left Brazil. In this sense, we will discuss in this section how the participants made the decision about the exchange, the exchange destination, and whether this process had the support from their family members or other people.

With regard to the female group *It's cultural*, the participants presented the following narrative (excerpts: perceptions about the exchange program):

01	Y	Can you talk a little about your experience at the exchange university (1), how you
02		chose the university and the country
03	Lf	(3) So I was an intern at the company PA, and then my advisor there, he got his
04		master's degree in Germany (1) and then when I was in the process of enrolling, he
05		emphasized that I should choose Germany […] and then when I chose the country
06		and was selected to write the three letters, the university where he had his master's
07		degree was not an option, so we searched, me, him, my mother, everyone who was
08		involved in this whole project to choose one of the three (2) options
09	Sf	Mine was (2), I was (1), the person who really encouraged me to enroll was a friend
10		of mine from the course who was going to enroll too and he said oh come on let's
11		do it, I said I don't know if I'll make it, I don't know what
12	Lf	@(1)@ (You always beat it)
13	Sf	Yeah, you always beat it this way, I don't know either (1) I didn't have a very good
14		English either because I had come from a public school, English isn't that good
15		there (1), he said why don't you try Portugal, there's vacancy for Portugal […] in the
16		middle of the process they canceled the vacancies for Portugal […] There was
17		vacancy for Australia, and other places, and for the United States, Canada, England
		and Italy, so I chose Italy

Although the families supervised the application process for the CsF (especially the mothers of scholarship holders), the main incentive for the exchange program and guidance regarding the exchange country and university were provided by third parties. In Laura's case, a professor and advisor encouraged her to choose Germany, given his experience as a master's degree student in that country. For Laura, international mobility represented an action planned as a project characterized by an *act to come*, as Alfred Schütz would say[15]. The engagement of the family and the advisor implies a high level of expectations regarding the exchange program, not only for Laura, but also for those who participated in the planning. These expectations extending beyond the time spent abroad seem to be related to the contributions that such experience may bring to the professional future of Laura and her advisor.

Regarding Sofia, her participation in the exchange program resulted from a spontaneous decision, motivated by the collective effervescence that CsF created among many undergraduate students. In this process, Sofia was encouraged by a friend who also applied for a scholarship ("He was going to apply too and he said let's go"), who helped her select a non-English speaking country ("try Portugal"). However, after the cancellation of vacancies for Portugal, Sofia chose to travel to Italy, a better option for her in terms of language.

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[15] According to Alfred Schütz (apud Wagner, 1979), "the project is the fantasy motivated by subsequent anticipated intention to develop the project" (pp. 138) for which "I've got to have some idea of the structure to be assembled before developing a plan" (pp. 139).

The influence of third parties in the decision for the exchange was also predominant among the participants of the male group *Out of the Box*, as seen below (excerpt: perceptions about the exchange program):

01	Y	What was the main reason to participate in the CsF Program
02	Gm	I fell into this by accident, for me an exchange program funded by the government was so
03		distant, I thought it was something for master's and doctoral students […] then one day
04		someone came and talked about it have you enrolled in the CsF, I asked is it still open,
05		when I saw it, it was for Portugal; South Korea, Japan, places that only **Portugal** I could
06		speak the language, the others, no way for me to apply (1) then I applied for Portugal and I
07		don't know if you've heard about it,
08		the application for Portugal was canceled
09	Tm	I guess I was in it too
10	Gm	Then they asked me to choose from Australia, United Kingdom and the States, then I chose
11		the United Kingdom because I wanted to go to Europe [...] then they put me to the United
12		States (1) and a city **I didn't even choose** in the United States
13	Tm	I really believe, I'm Catholic and this CsF program, I was in a cytology class […] and I was
14		talking to this master's student and he said oh there's this thing called CsF it's really cool
15		blah-blah-blah <u>I didn't even care</u>, I said ok, just like he said that's for <u>students from the</u>
16		<u>master's program</u>
17	Gm	You don't think it can happen to you, like you are now graduating and you know nothing
18		about life and are sent abroad (1), it's such a distant reality for us
19	Tm	My partner is a good friend [...] at that time he came and said hey man I enrolled in the CsF
20		(1) I didn't even want to know what it was I just said **hey you're going to leave me alone**
21		**here in this sh**** (1) then he said **today is the last day @you should enroll too@** (2)
22		then we chose Portugal also because we didn't have any language certificate <u>and that's it […]</u>
23		**then there was Germany there man I think it's God I don't know** I started to think like
24		this when will I be able to learn German in my life […] then I went to Germany

Academic mobility at the undergraduate level was seen as a "distant" reality, accessible only to graduate students. The expression "now graduating and you know nothing about life" reinforces not only the experience abroad as something unimaginable in their lives so far, but also the lack of information about actions and programs developed by the university that go beyond the offer of usual disciplines taken by the students. Like Sofia's report, Guadaci and Tino also emphasized the decision about the exchange did not result from a planned action ("I fell into this by accident"), but from a collective call ("then one day someone came and talked about it"), which it is perceived by one participant as a divine providence ("I really believe, I'm Catholic").

The collective effervescence produced by a master's student who came into the room where the students were and talked about the CsF is also reproduced by the participants in the

group discussion. The narrative is built in an interactive and colloquial manner, with laughter and, sometimes, higher tone of voice: "I didn't even want to know what it was I just said hey you're going to leave me alone here in this sh** then he said today is the last day you should enroll too." It also shows some euphoria as it was the "last day" to enroll in the CsF. In this respect, as reported by Sofia, Tino also indicated Portugal as the first option ("we didn't have any language certificate"), but was sent to Germany instead, as scholarships for Portugal were cancelled. Apparently, Guadaci was already proficient in English, but his request for the United Kingdom was denied and he was sent to the United States without the possibility of choosing his destination ("a city I didn't even choose").

In the following excerpt, the participants narrate how the news of the exchange was received by their families (excerpt: perceptions about the exchange program):

25	Y	And did you have any incentive from your parents to take an exchange program?
26	Gm	I had it from my mother, from my father, no my father is very, I don't know, from
27		an early age, he went to work, his whole life, he was dedicated to work, he didn't
28		have education like that of the same quality as my mother had, my mother had
29		higher education, my father didn't […] So regarding the exchange, he didn't,
30		traveling and things like that, you have to stay here and work, I don't know, you
31		have to graduate soon; but my mother said, in my time I would never have an
32		opportunity like that so you are having a chance, go for it […]
33	Tm	As I didn't believe I was going to, I didn't tell anyone […] create expectations for
34		anyone to annoy me, then this thing arrived anyway I didn't believe it (2) then it's
35		good, then another email arrived telling me to choose the country then I went to
36		talk (1) with my brother because my brother and I are very close and then I asked
37		do you think it's worth it then he said **of course it's worth it** you have to go and
38		then I went (2) think about what I wanted before talking to my mother (2)
39		because my father is more or less what (2) Guadaci said more hard-headed,
40		closed-minded […] at first she didn't want it, and my father didn't either my dad
41		**blah-blah-blah** you have to work and graduate soon blah-blah-blah; then (his
42		friend) started saying oh it will be great **then my father was @very excited@ no**
43		**Tino you have to go you have to go** (1) then my mother got excited too

For some family members (especially the father), the exchange program was related to a tourism trip ("travel"), unnecessary luxury, and even a threat to the immediate plans made by the family for their children, which consisted of "staying here [and] working" to "graduate" as

soon as possible. This restricted horizon of the father ("hard-headed, closed-minded") is associated by young people with a lower level of education when compared to their mothers ("he didn't have education like that of the same quality as my mother had"). In this sense, they make no judgment about the inability of their parents to see the long-term return that such experience of studying abroad would provide for the future professional career of their children. This challenge in believing in a project that does not offer immediate financial return, involving more expenses for the family due to the extended studies, is not a an isolated case in this group. The survey applied in the first stage of the research showed that only 34.48% of the scholarship holders received support from both parents regarding the exchange program.

In the case of Tino, the exchange program was seen with suspicion also by himself ("as I didn't believe I was going to, I didn't tell anyone"). When the fathers were surprised by the news of a CsF grant, they had to be convinced by the mothers (in the case of Guadaci) or by other family members and friends (in the case of Tino) so the fathers would agree with the travel abroad and start to support their children's projects.

Experience in the exchange country

International mobility provides multiple experiences, both at the university and in everyday life, promoting contact with different cultures and maybe feeling strange regarding the student's own culture. Academic mobility is not restricted to the university environment, as it offers various experiences. In the following excerpt, we sought to understand what was more important or what ensured the greatest contribution in the international experience in the perspective of the participants of the female group *It's Cultural* (excerpt: perceptions about the exchange program):

18 Y1 And for you, what was the biggest contribution of the exchange
19 Lf (2) <u>Personal growth</u>
20 Sf I would say (1) personal growth (1) too <u>much more than academic growth</u>

21	Lf	Much more than our academic growth, <u>there's no comparison</u>
22	Sf	<u>There's no comparison</u> and that, in my opinion, today I wouldn't say that, before
23		maybe, but it's worth much more than academic growth because with your personal
24		growth you'll get much further academically too
25	Lf	<u>Yeah, or sure</u>
26	Sf	But personal growth; (3) you learn a lot
27	Lf	No comparison
28	Sf	As she said, you learn to find a way, you (1) learn how to deal with the issue of
29		being in a different place, with this issue of differences, of <u>adapting yourself</u> to new
30		situations
31	Lf	Yeah
32	Sf	To new challenges, <u>right</u>
33	Lf	Respect others too
34	Sf	<u>And be more tolerant</u> too
35	Lf	<u>Be more tolerant</u>
36	Sf	Be more, maybe have more empathy because you know the other can be different
37	Lf	Uh huh
38	Sf	But I would also say more personal growth and this thing, for example, you (1) have
39		to learn another language (1) <u>but there's no way you have to learn</u>; because you are
40		there
41	Lf	Yeah
42	Sf	Then you <u>have to find a way</u> and you have to really do everything in that language
43	Lf	└In a moment you have
44	Sf	<u>to communicate yourself and adapt</u> to the habits of people who are there
45	Lf	Yeah
46	Sf	So yeah, I think it's a big personal growth indeed
47	Lf	It's because exchange is living, so if (1) you don't grow as a person (1) @there's
48		something wrong@ you were in a bubble right

In this excerpt, a highly interactive discussion about the topic is marked by intense turn-taking, in which the pauses, words or phrases pronounced emphatically or in a high tone, generally ratifying and complementing the previous speech, show a high degree of agreement regarding the meaning and importance that such experience brought to their lives. The words "growth" and "grow" were used seven times by the female participants, who associate these words with personal and academic enhancement. Adapting to "new situations," "new challenges," "habits of people," "respect," "be more tolerant," and "have more empathy" were also mentioned as great learning and contribution from experiences in another country.

Laura also uses the "bubble" metaphor, possibly referring to the CsF scholarship holders who were not able to open up to new experiences and learning from interpersonal relationships. The "bubble" represents becoming closed in oneself or to the group of Brazilian students abroad, not allowing the student to meet the other, the different. On the other hand, getting out of the "bubble" allows the student to open up to the new, the unknown. The result

of this experience brought more autonomy, independence, empathy and respect for the different, among other things.

For being situated in the field of interpersonal relationships, the female participants associated the acquisition of these skills with personal enhancement, and not so much with academic growth and the importance of these skills in professional and work relationships. However, it is exactly this "personal growth" that will allow them to "get much further academically too," that is, overcome challenges such as issues with communication in an unknown environment constitutes a *stock of experiences*, according to Alfred Schütz (Wagner, 1979), which may be used in the future in different contexts, not only in the personal and academic domains.

Similarly, the male group *Out of the Box* sees the experience abroad as transformative of thoughts and attitudes, which expanded their worldviews, their knowledge about themselves and about others, as seen in the following excerpt (excerpt: perceptions about the exchange program):

44	Y1	Could you talk a little about what was most important during the exchange program,
45		what <u>marked you most</u>
46	Gm	Ah, the fact that I met my wife there […] but also seeing how things work outside Brazil,
47		you have no idea how much people <u>think inside the box</u>, so you don't think <u>outside the</u>
48		<u>box</u> when you're in your country so I left here, I don't know, full of <u>prejudices</u> and so
49		on; and it's amazing how the exchange program can change someone, you know, there,
50		you're going to have a class with a Muslim, you're going to have a class with a Hindu,
51		you're going to have a class with people of the most diverse beliefs and religions and so
52		on, and you'll see that it's not necessarily one of them and it's alright and you see how
53		<u>closed</u>-minded you were for certain things, accept certain behaviors or not and so it's a
54		slap in the face for someone with a small mind, it's a slap in the face so <u>it was very good</u>
55		<u>for me</u>
56	Tm	For me (1) the most important thing, I guess it was of a <u>personal</u> nature because you are
57		usually very alone too (1) and then you <u>think, think and rethink</u> and (2) think about life
58		and it gets better, it gets worse and it changes so that for me it is the most important of
59		the experiences I had there for the person I <u>became</u> […] but something I learned there <u>is</u>
60		<u>the respect</u> and concern for others because even though the Germans are <u>crazy</u> and
61		<u>closed</u> and don't talk to you, if they see that you need help they will <u>help you</u>

The expression "closed-minded," previously used to define the restricted horizon of the father, is now used by the participants to define themselves regarding their personal/cultural limitations ("you don't think outside the box") and "prejudices" they have ("people think inside the box"). Being in a classroom with "Muslims," "Hindus" or with "people of the most diverse

beliefs and religions" made them realize that a person is not "necessarily" "right" while others are wrong. This lesson is defined by Guadaci emphatically and in a high voice as a "slap in the face". However, the expression used by him does not refer to an insult, but to the opportunity to broaden his horizons and his interpersonal relationships with people from different countries, beliefs and cultures ("it was very good for me"). Although briefly mentioned, his openness to others also helped him meet his wife, from the United States, during the exchange program.

For Tino, the personal growth provided by the exchange program is associated, above all, with the moments of isolation that helped him get to know himself better, and "think" and "rethink" about his own life. While Guadaci highlighted the experience with foreign people, Tino's reflections were more focused on the native people, defined by him as "crazy" and "closed," who talk little to foreigners, but, even so, are willing to help someone who is not close to them ("if they see that you need help they will help you").

Professional perspectives and projects for the future

Data from the survey applied to scholarship holders from public high schools showed desire to continue studying in graduate studies (51%), both abroad (30%) and in Brazil (21%). In this regard, we addressed this topic with the study groups in order to learn about the construction process of their future projects and analyze to what extent the exchange program abroad helped them expand or not their professional perspectives and projects for the future.

In the female group, the experience abroad was decisive for the development of new horizons regarding the future and the redefinition of previous projects, as narrated below (excerpt: projects for the future):

49	Y1	And what do you think about doing after graduation in terms of future projects
50	Lf	Well, to be honest, I want to pass an exam for a good public job, that's it […] I
51		want to be happy, have quality of life, be close to people I love, I guess that's it, I
52		don't know, it's my goal
53	Sf	Well, I'm still not sure but I guess that if I had another opportunity to go back, I
54		guess I would go back, especially if it was for a master's degree, a graduate program,
55		a scholarship in that sense, even a job, but I think it's a little more difficult, a job
56		opportunity straight like this

57	Lf	Something you said about a master's degree when I started the exchange program, I
58		was <u>crazy</u> about continuing my academic life, I <u>took Pet, Pibic, I already thought</u>
59		<u>about everything</u>, everything was
60	Sf	Planned
61	Lf	Planned, I'll take a master's program (1) <u>but when I went there</u> I saw that a master's
62		is a <u>very Latin</u> degree […] and then when I came back (1) @I realized@ that in my
63		field too, it doesn't have much weight here for a job, unless you <u>continue</u> to a
64		doctor's degree; (1) so your academic life, but the master's degree; I guess I lost motivation
65	Sf	With me, it was kind of the opposite […] I don't know, I think it's because: I
66		already had that kind of thing I thought I think maybe I thought like that, <u>wow</u>,
67		that's the <u>highest</u> I'm going to get, it's the university
68	Lf	Ah ok, then you saw
69	Sf	Then I saw
70	Lf	Another world
71	Sf	Another world, I thought, <u>my goodness</u>, I'm in a public university, I'm the first in
72		my family to go to a public university
73	Lf	Yeah
74	Sf	So, for me, it was like, well, you know, I got a lot for my family, and <u>for my</u>
75		<u>grandmother</u> […]
76	Lf	└Pride
77	Sf	<u>I'm the only one</u> who goes to a public university […] so this was a lot for me, so I
78		never thought like, oh, I'm going to take a master's program; I thought that I had to
79		<u>achieve the goal</u> I'm going to try to <u>graduate</u> and get a good job and that's going to
80		be <u>a lot</u> in my family
81	Lf	└Graduate
82	Sf	so now I don't think like that, I think that if I have an opportunity to continue; to
83		have a master's degree and continue my studies I think I would embrace this
84		opportunity both here and abroad (1) and a job too of course but I'm not very
85		focused on a public job exam, I don't know, I think that a public job exam will hold
86		me here; I guess I want to feel free

The topic is again discussed by Laura and Sofia through constant turn-taking, in an exercise of synchronicity and complementation, including even the collective construction of words: "then you saw" (Lf), "then I saw" (Sf), "another world" (Lf), "another world" (Sf). This collective construction of a shared experience in common shows a habitual agreement between the two female participants regarding the central orientation or the meaning of the exchange program. Seeing "another world" allowed them to adjust their orientation and priorities of projects after graduation, which was different for both students. Laura always sought to participate in projects, such as the Tutorial Education Program (PET) and the Institutional Program of Scientific Initiation Scholarship (PIBIC), aiming to start a graduate program. However, after her experience with the exchange program, she no longer wants to take a master's program, which, in her opinion, is a "very Latin degree" and without "much weight"

for the job market. For her, "passing a public job exam," regardless of whether or not associated with her initial training, became more relevant to her future "goals," that is, "to be happy, have quality of life, be close" to people she loves.

Although Laura received encouragement from her family and guidance from university professors in the process of choosing the exchange country and university, the experience of being away from her family led to a redefinition of her priorities: finding a job that allows close contact with her family became more relevant than the search for professionalization in the field of natural sciences. For Sofia, who without prior planning decided to enroll in the CsF and chose to travel to Italy under the exchange program, the experience abroad produced an "opposite" effect, that is, it expanded her horizons to possibilities that were not part of her universe due to her family origin. For the young woman, "studying at a public university" and attending an engineering course made her and her family feel proud. However, the opportunity to study abroad and the contact with other realities and cultures made Sofia get to know "another world," which was not imagined by her or her family. In this sense, she reported being open to new experiences, for instance, a graduate program or job in Brazil or abroad ("and a job too of course"). She does not want to take a public job exam because that would hold her to the context where she lives, which she does not want, given that she wants to "feel free."

In the male group, the discussion about future projects presents more concrete plans when compared to the female group, considering that one of the male participants had already graduated and the other one was in the conclusion phase (excerpt: projects for the future):

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62  Y1   Could you talk now about future projects, what you intend to do after graduation
63  Gm   […] I've been at this company (1) for two and a half years I really like it, I get along
64       very well with the people there, but I have my personal projects so (1) I intend to
65       launch my app in a few years on which I've been working and that's it (1) academic
66       project so I think I don't have the intention to take a master's program, I graduated
67       last semester […] following the academic life I don't think so now, it's what I want,
68       I like to teach I think it's cool, but in my field, if you're going to pursue a graduate
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69		degree, if you want to be a professor […] for the job market, they don't really look
70		at whether you have a master's degree or a doctor's degree, they want the guy who
71		knows how to do it […]
72	Tm	Eh, I'm graduating now, so my mind is a turbulence of things, defining what I'm
73		going to do, if I'm going to stay here, if I'm going to go back to my city or I wish I
74		had the courage to go, but I don't have the courage to leave […] because with the
75		CsF, we had all the support behind us, whether or not we had a date to return, we
76		had the Government that could help us, we had other Brazilians, we had the
77		university, and now if I leave I'll be alone […] so (1) now that's what I see,
78		specialization in Endodontics, a dental specialty, and with faith in God, I want to
79		pass an exam to be a firefighter because here in Brazil (1) I think there's no other
80		way in the country we live, in the city of XX, public departments are an option.

Unlike the female group, the speeches produced by the male students in this group occur in a parallel way, that is, the narration takes place in a sequence and the turn is almost always taken by Guadaci after the interviewer's question. Tino rarely interrupts Guadaci's narrative and vice versa. However, this different type of discourse organization does not mean that there is no similarity between their experiences and synchronicity or a habitual agreement regarding their meaning. With reference to professional perspectives and projects for the future, Guadaci presents results from the exchange program in information technology in the United States. He was hired by a company because of the knowledge acquired during the exchange program: "I learned a programming language there […] when I came back in January I applied for an internship and in February I was already in an internship program […] they said that I was hired because I had taken the test in the language they use there, and that's exactly what I learned there" (excerpt: contributions of the exchange program).

Guadaci also talked about his plans for the future, including the launch of an "app" he is "working on." The experience abroad provided him with positive results in the personal and professional areas, with fruits still to be harvested after the launch of the product he is developing. Tino said he still didn't know what to do after graduating ("my mind is a turbulence of things"). He didn't know if he would stay in the city or go back to where his parents live. It shows that he has no "courage" to "leave," that is, to leave again without the support from the "Government", the "university," or "other Brazilians" ("if I leave I'll be alone"). Among the perspectives for a near and safe future, specialization and approval in a firefighter exam with the possibility of working as a dentist are possibilities that can become a reality.

In this sense, Tino's future prospects are somehow similar to those presented by Laura regarding the search for financial security in a public job ("I think there's no other way in the

country we live"). However, Tino does not associate this choice with the possibility of "being happy [and] having quality of life," as Laura said.

Student mobility within the CsF program: some considerations about school origin

According to Zago (2006, pp. 236), we still need to "understand the changes in school demands and practices, as well as the profile of students in contemporary society." In this respect, it is important to study the trajectories of these students who not only achieved long school longevity through access to public higher education in more selective courses, but also participated in an experience of internationalization, which is more common among students from the middle and upper classes (Nogueira, 1998; Nogueira et al., 2008).

Studies about the CsF focused on the analysis of the social, family and educational origin of the scholarship holders highlight that students from private high schools, from families with few children and with more educated parents exercising professions of higher social prestige and financial return presented more chances of winning a scholarship (Feltrin et al., 2021; Gomes, 2020; Lopes, 2020). Also about the correlation between school capital and access to the program by women, Feltrin et al. (2016), based on studies conducted at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp), highlight that students who managed to overcome the gender barrier, becoming women without borders, had also attended most of their basic education in private schools. These studies emphasize what has already been discussed by other researchers in the field of Sociology of Education, that is, the search for distinction in school and academic trajectory resulting from internship and international exchange experiences occurs mainly in families of higher economic capital (Aguiar, 2009; Nogueira, 1998; Nogueira et al., 2008).

At the university where we applied the survey, we also identified a higher percentage of scholarship holders from private schools. However, we also identified other factors related to social context that may hinder or prevent the participation of students from disadvantaged classes in academic mobility programs. In group discussion held for this study, the decision to apply for a CsF scholarship was not motivated by the family, but by other colleagues. Opinions against the exchange program were observed from less educated parents. In this respect, while the exchange is perceived by middle- and high-income families as a differentiation in the

academic and professional training of their children, in the lower classes, in some cases, it is seen as a tourism trip that delays the completion of the undergraduate course and entering the job market.

The fragility of school capital, attested by the lack of proficiency in a foreign language, was also a topic of studies about the CsF. Borges (2015) and Borges and Garcia-Filice (2016) show that private school students with a solid background in the English language during basic education had fewer problems during the CsF exchange. Group discussion conducted in our study also demonstrated the lack of proficiency in English constituted an obstacle to academic mobility and limited the options when choosing an exchange country. Yet, the gap in foreign language training can motivate the development of strategies to overcome the language challenges that affect interpersonal relationships. The participants in the female group reported not only issues with the language of the exchange country, but also with the methods adopted for learning the language with the help of native people.

For the students in our study, academic mobility did not result from a personal or family plan, but from an unexpected opportunity provided by a large-scale call. During this process, the students had to overcome some personal or organizational barriers, such as disbelief in the selection process, lack of knowledge of exchange programs for undergraduate students, poor family support, and issues with the foreign language. However, once these barriers were overcome, the contributions of the international experience went beyond the academic domain and changed their ways of being and living in the world. Their experiences abroad helped change attitudes and values and expand or change future projects. As a "personal gain," the participants highlighted the experience abroad had an impact on their lives as a whole, in both the academic and professional domains.

Final considerations

Our study helped understand academic mobility as an important internationalization strategy, foreseen in goal 12.12 of the 2014-2024 National Education Plan (PNE) which aims to "consolidate and expand programs and actions to encourage student and professor mobility in undergraduate courses and graduate courses, nationally and internationally, with a view to enriching higher education" (Law nº 13005, 2014). In the context of our study, the international

experience represented a differentiation in the trajectory of undergraduate students, which emphasizes the importance of further studies about the effect of academic mobility in the medium and long term. It means that public policies of academic mobility, such as the CsF program, must include monitoring and systematic evaluation as an important tool to be included in the allocated resources.

Although the PNE does not define percentages of students and professors to be included in academic mobility programs, actions and programs should be consider to address aspects preceding the travel abroad and that were largely neglected by the CsF and Brazilian universities, including preparation regarding the language and culture of the exchange country, the creation of networks and partnerships between the home university and the exchange university, and strengthening of associations of former CsF participants who can share their experiences, and help prepare future participants, especially those who, for the first time in their lives, will have the experience of living abroad without the support of their families.

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