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## Systematization of Information from International Academic Mobility in Higher Education Institutions in Santa Catarina

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This research pursues to understand the strategies utilized by higher education institutions in Santa Catarina State in the systematization of information from international academic mobility in their institutions. **Methodology:** This is an applied and descriptive qualitative research, which uses documental and bibliographic research to help achieve the objectives. Data collection was carried out through 10 semi-structured interviews with representatives of public and community institutions of higher education in Santa Catarina. The analysis of the information acquired was performed using the content analysis technique. **Results:** The research results demonstrate fragility in the strategies of systematization of information from international academic mobility programs, and the need for a single and efficient system to record the varied information acquired in this process. We also emphasize the importance of systematizing information related to significant dimensions of knowledge to achieve the goals set by students and institutions with exchange programs. **Conclusion:** In this context, a theoretical model is proposed, represented by essential groups of academic, administrative, intercultural, and linguistic informational requirements for the continuous systematization of information by the management of higher education institutions active in the internationalization process and exchange students.

### KEYWORDS

University management. Internationalization. Academic mobility. Informational requirements.

## Sistematização das Informações da Mobilidade Acadêmica Internacional nas Instituições de Ensino Superior de Santa Catarina

### RESUMO

A presente pesquisa busca compreender as estratégias adotadas pelas instituições de ensino superior de Santa Catarina na sistematização das informações provenientes da mobilidade acadêmica internacional em suas instituições. Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa aplicada e descritiva, que utiliza a pesquisa documental e bibliográfica para auxiliar no alcance dos objetivos. A coleta de dados foi realizada por meio de 10 entrevistas semiestruturadas com representantes das instituições públicas e comunitárias de ensino superior de Santa Catarina que aceitaram participar da pesquisa. A análise das informações adquiridas foi realizada por meio da técnica de análise de conteúdo. Os resultados da pesquisa demonstram fragilidade nas estratégias de sistematização das informações provenientes dos programas de mobilidade acadêmica internacional, e a necessidade de existência de um sistema único e eficiente para registrar as variadas informações decorrentes desse processo. Ressalta-se ainda a importância da sistematização das informações relacionadas com dimensões do conhecimento significativas para o alcance dos objetivos traçados pelos estudantes e pelas instituições com os programas de intercâmbio. Nesse contexto, é proposto um modelo teórico representado por grupos de requisitos informacionais acadêmicos, administrativos, interculturais e linguísticos essenciais para a sistematização contínua de informações por instituições de ensino superior atuantes no processo de internacionalização e por estudantes de mobilidade acadêmica internacional.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Gestão universitária. Internacionalização. Mobilidade acadêmica. Requisitos informacionais.

## Sistematización de la Información de la Movilidad Académica Internacional en las Instituciones de Educación Superior de Santa Catarina

### RESUMEN

Esta investigación busca comprender las estrategias adoptadas por las instituciones de educación superior de Santa Catarina en la sistematización de la información de la movilidad académica internacional en sus instituciones. Se trata de una investigación cualitativa aplicada y descriptiva, que utiliza la investigación documental y bibliográfica para ayudar al logro de los objetivos. La recolección de datos se realizó a través de 10 entrevistas semiestructuradas con representantes de instituciones de educación superior públicas y comunitarias de Santa Catarina que aceptaron participar en la investigación. El análisis de la información adquirida se realizó mediante la técnica de análisis de contenido. Los resultados de la investigación muestran fragilidad en las estrategias de sistematización de la información de los programas de movilidad académica internacional, y la necesidad de un sistema único y eficiente para registrar la variada información adquirida en este proceso. También destacamos la importancia de sistematizar la información relacionada con dimensiones significativas del conocimiento para lograr los objetivos planteados por los estudiantes y las instituciones con programas de intercambio. En este contexto, se propone un modelo teórico, representado por grupos de requerimientos de información académicos, administrativos, interculturales y lingüísticos indispensables para la sistematización continua de la información por parte de la dirección de las instituciones de educación superior activas en el proceso de internacionalización y movilidad académica internacional de los estudiantes.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Gestión universitaria. Internacionalización. Movilidad académica. Requisitos informativos.

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## Introduction

The academic mobility of Higher Education students is a reflection of strategic planning and actions outlined by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the search for increased quality of education and the need to keep up with the trends and demands of the globalized world (CONROY; MCCARTHY, 2019; DE WIT, 2013; KNIGHT, 2003; STALLIVIERI, 2017).

Those who are applying for exchange programs begin the preparations and planning of their trip to their destination and proceed with their studies and experience abroad; however, sometimes there is little structured information about the foreign HEI and the destination place. Culture shock, communication difficulties, and psychological issues are scenarios often experienced by exchange students when leaving their usual routine condition to experience new unfamiliar environments (CONROY and MCCARTHY, 2019). In contrast, positive results of the experiences and knowledge acquired abroad indicate a direct relationship with the quality of education, given the dissemination of the learning experienced and newly acquired innovative concepts in different global perspectives, which ultimately strengthen internationalization processes and the demand for other students to enter international academic mobility programs (BUKOWSKI, 2020; STALLIVIERI, 2017).

Stallivieri (2017) emphasizes that Higher Education Institutions need to plan and organize better the ways of monitoring and preparing students and that this guidance should be more comprehensive and not only before the trip or pre-trip. It is necessary to have the supply and operational support with informational elements and mechanisms to help the student's life abroad, that is, the student must be able to conduct his/her personal and academic life with quality while developing his/her studies. Therefore, achieving the students' goals with the exchange experiences is directly related to the preparation they receive before, during, and after the academic mobility program; and, hence, the success of academic mobility is related to four dimensions of knowledge, since they act together and complement each other: intercultural, linguistic, academic and administrative (STALLIVIERI, 2017).

The intercultural dimension involves personal, social, and cultural aspects. It expresses the understanding and deep knowledge of other cultures, the linguistic aspect, respect, appreciation, and the ability to interact amidst the countless differences that exist among different peoples. These concepts must be internalized to avoid or minimize culture shock (STALLIVIERI, 2017). The linguistic dimension, as the term itself induces to clarify, is directly related to the issue of communication: understanding and being understood, being able to solve daily problems and minimize cultural barriers and miscommunication, given the linguistic ability to master the local language.

The academic and administrative dimensions encompass elements that involve both the student and university management. The former is related to the study itself, the courses,

the relationship with the professors, credit transfer, and validation. The second identifies the importance and the responsibility of the Higher Education Institution to ensure the quality of teaching through agreements and partnerships with universities of excellence abroad, preparation, and adequate instruction to the students who will participate in the exchange program (STALLIVIERI, 2017).

However, there is still a significant gap in capturing, organizing, systematizing, and making available in a more efficient way the amount of information generated and acquired; and the methods used in the dissemination when related to the use of information to improve the preparation of future exchange students. Thus, the objective of this research was to understand the strategies adopted by Higher Education Institutions of the State of Santa Catarina (HEI) to systematize the information from international academic mobility in their institutions and to indicate a theoretical model composed of essential informational groups to contribute to the improvement of university management of academic mobility programs and the success of participants in institutional exchange programs.

## Methodology

The present study has the objective of applied qualitative research, a typology that permeates the world of social sciences, and aims to improve reality and apply the knowledge found (GIL, 2008). The rationale for choosing the qualitative approach is based on what Flick (2013, p. 93) states: “Because the participants in question would be difficult to reach by quantitative methods” or “Another factor influencing the choice may be that the number of potential participants (e.g., people with a specific but rare diagnosis) is small (though not too small),” or, “One may want to explore a field to discover something new” (FLICK, 2013, p. 93).

Furthermore, we used documentary sources and the analysis of the practices of the educational institutions of the intended sample. The use of a qualitative approach in data collection makes use of the process of interpretation to reach the objectives in the expansion of data and information, in the reflection of the researcher with the participants, but there is no use of statistical measurements or purely numerical measurements; however, there is room for the process of observation, interpretation and deep analysis of reality (SAMPIERI, COLLADO; LUCIO, 2013).

When dealing with the classification criterion as to the objectives set out, it can be identified as descriptive research, which seeks the improvement or better understanding of reality in a given place and population through investigative questions (GIL, 2002). We used a bibliographic search and interviews with subjects who, through their experiences and proximity to the problem-issue and research unit, could report or clarify the facts (GIL, 2002).

For data collection, interviews were used as an instrument, defined as: “A meeting between two people, so that one of them obtains information about a particular subject through a conversation of professional nature” (LAKATOS; MARCONI, 2003, p.195). The

method is partially structured, also called semi-structured by Gil (2002), where the interview is pre-defined in parts with the use of essential elements that will make the direction, but that can be explored and expanded according to the perception of the interviewer along the way.

Semi-structured interviews were then used with representatives of public and community Higher Education Institutions in the State of Santa Catarina. The population universe was composed of 18 active HEIs, and the sample consisted of 10 institutions since these were the ones that agreed to participate in the research. After data collection, we used the descriptive method and the content analysis proposed by Bardin (2011) to analyze the results.

Given the global pandemic scenario of Covid-19 and the distance of the interviewer to the respondents, it was decided to use Microsoft's virtual meeting tool, Teams. However, two institutions requested that the questions be sent by e-mail, claiming a lack of time, and returned the duly completed questionnaires on time.

The questionnaire has a group of possible responses, classified as structured and unstructured. Cooper and Schindler (2016, p. 307 and 308) state that "Unstructured responses consist of open-ended answers with free choice of words". In contrast, "Structured responses are closed", that is, the questions provide specific alternatives to be answered.

The interviews followed a script pre-established by the researchers, with 20 questions or guiding questions for the procedure. The table below shows the categories established in the data collection instrument.

**Table 1.** Analysis categories of the research instrument

CATEGORIES	QUESTIONS
Introductions: profile and internationalization indicators of the interviewed institution	1-8
Systematization of international academic mobility information	9-16
Logistical support for the international academic mobility student	17-19
Open question - informant's considerations	20

Source: Prepared by the authors (2021).

The interviews were watched again through the recording - with the participants' permission - and the data were categorized and grouped in an Excel spreadsheet. Furthermore, to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, alphabetical codes were defined for each interviewee, and each transcript and the interviews were automatically saved by Microsoft's own program in the cloud, within the Onedrive application correlated to the interviewer's user and password.

According to Gil (2002), the transcription of the answers is extremely important; the researcher needs to be able and attentive in recording the information so that nothing is omitted. The details of the course of the interview are also relevant, as well as the interviewees' reactions to the questions should be recorded.

Next, we present the analysis of the results acquired through the interviews, as well as the bibliographic and documentary analyses of the public and community HEIs in the State of Santa Catarina.

## Results

The first stage analyzed was the classification of the institutions between public and community institutions. The research participants were internationalization advisors, sector coordinators, department heads, secretaries, and institutional internationalization analysts of the HEIs belonging to the study population. Out of a total of 18 public and community institutions in operation located in the State of Santa Catarina, only 5 are maintained by the Federal, State, or Municipal Government, that is, there is no tuition or monthly fees charged (SILVA, 2001). Among the five public HEIs, only the University of the State of Santa Catarina (UNESC) is maintained by the State of Santa Catarina, but it is also considered communitarian because it belongs to the system of the Associação Catarinense das Fundações Educacionais (ACAFE (Santa Catarina Association of Educational Foundations)). Moreover, the other four public HEIs are federal, i.e., maintained with resources from the Federal Government.

At the beginning of the interview, they were asked about their perception of the level of internationalization of their organization according to their experience. The question consisted in identifying in which stage of internationalization their HEI is: initial, medium, or advanced.

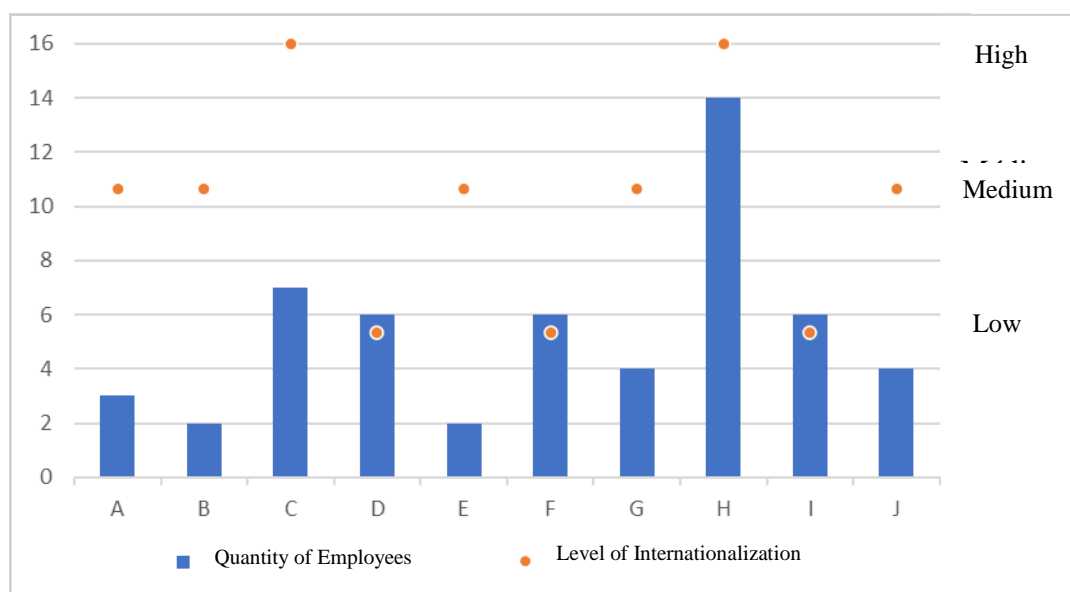
These levels were predefined as follows: initial, few academic mobility programs, or almost zero, in implementation, and/or some other form of internationalization in an early stage (virtualization of teaching, change of curriculum, and reception of foreign students); medium, the HEI already has a defined internationalization policy and recognized by the organization's management, exchange programs, its own team in the internationalization sector, even if small, and some internationalization programs, beyond international academic mobility; advanced, strong institutional internationalization policy, active international agreements and high inflow and outflow of international and local students, presence of other types of internationalization and structured team in the respective international relations office.

It was observed that the higher the degree of internationalization and academic mobility index (number of programs, calls, and participating students), the higher the number of employees in the international relations offices. It is believed that this finding is related to

the high demand and the effective need for professionals to fulfill the tasks and administrative requirements.

However, a significant staff is present in institutions that are currently at the peak of the implementation and boosting of academic mobility and internationalization; that is, considered by them to be at the initial level of internationalization, possibly due to the efforts and focus of managers in establishing the organizational culture of internationalization in their centers of Higher Education. Such a statement is seen in the following chart:

**Chart 1.** Comparison of the number of employees x level of internationalization



Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the size of the team, institutions F, G and H argue that the team is limited. Although the interviewee from university H has the highest number of employees in its team when compared to the other institutions - due to the significant number of international mobility programs and agreements and the level of internationalization - there is an overload of work and difficulty in convincing university leaders to direct more employees to the sector.

One of the reasons for this situation is that according to respondent F, internationalization is not yet at the forefront. The importance, the need, the benefits, and the demand for government policies are known, as Lima and Maranhão (2008), Stallivieri (2018), and De Wit (2013) discuss in their studies; but even so, international affairs offices are seen as an “extra” or less urgent sector for local institutional management.

Another perspective presented by the interviewees from institutions A and J is that, despite the existence of the internationalization sector in their organizations and the fact that they have been established and structured for some time, there is a high prevalence of academic mobility programs in the “OUT” mode, that is, sending students abroad, but that



there is not as much concern in receiving more students or in encouraging the entry of foreign students.

Likewise, the other forms of internationalization are not properly addressed according to these interviewees. It is noticeable the managers' lack of interest in adequately exploring the other modalities of internationalization, such as the change in the curriculum structure, an element of internationalization at home (IeC), identified by Leask (2012), the virtualization of Higher Education, widely used recently due to the Covid-19 pandemic (CHANG; GOMES, 2022), the teaching of subjects in the English language and/or that deal with concepts, attitudes and international learning (TEICHLER, 2017).

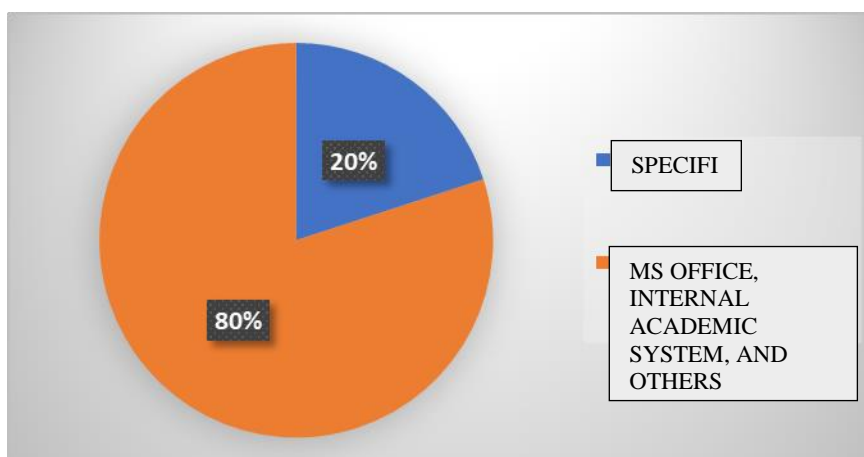
Teichler (2017) discussed the concern with the narrow view of internationalization by managers and the academic community extensively. He argues that efforts are directed at the number of academic mobility agreements and covenants and international students entering and leaving universities and local students pursuing the student exchange program. Nevertheless, other effective internationalization options can reach a larger number of students and enable great academic experiences for all.

One of the activities proposed by the aforementioned author is to focus on attitudes and the gaining of multicultural knowledge, in other words, to allow students to learn amidst contrasts, and adversities, with multiple solutions to problems presented in the classroom, with critical guidance by professors in "thinking outside the box", the knowledge that is sometimes acquired and worked on when the student is in a foreign country, participating in an international academic mobility program (TEICHLER, 2017).

The strategies for systematizing information are exposed in the question regarding which types of programs or which programs are used to systematize the information from the exchanges.

According to the following chart, 80% of the HEIs use standard Microsoft Excel spreadsheets, Word tables, Google Forms, and existing internal programs that contain the basic registration information of the students and their courses enrolled in the HEI.



**Chart 2.** Programs used to systematize international academic mobility information

Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

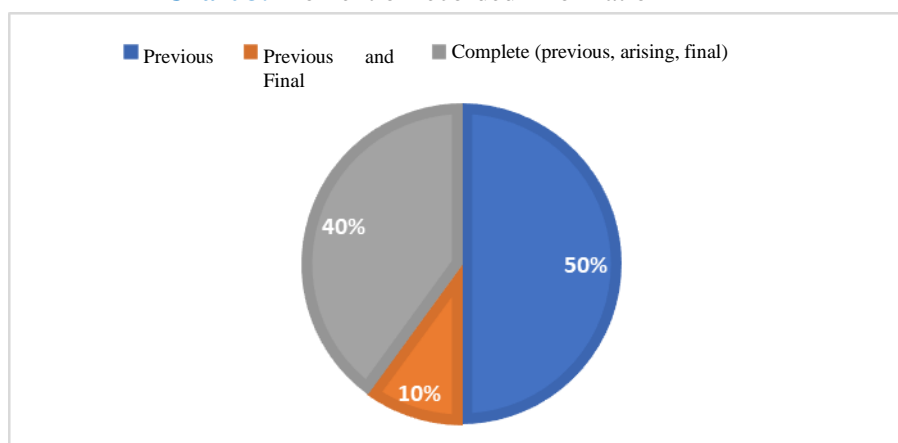
Institutions G and H have a specific program for recording information related to academic mobility. The program used by the former involves the initial contact of the student with the exchange program and works as follows: the opening announcements with information about the places available, rules for participation in international mobility, and the deadline for applications are posted on the official online page of the international relations office; then, those interested in joining the announcement can fill in their information on the online form available in this program. The clerk can extract the data, issue Excel reports, and proceed with the process of selecting the applicants and the documentation required to prepare for sending the student abroad.

The system of the second HEI that uses a specific program is similar to the first. The student can log in to the official site with his/her general student ID and apply for the vacancy offered in the open announcement. In this system, there is exclusive access for the sector's employees, and the data is automatically sent to the institution's internal academic registration system.

The interviewees were also asked about the moment the information was recorded, that is, when the spreadsheets or the reports were fed or updated with information about the academic mobility of these students who were approved in the edicts and in fact went to study part of their undergraduate or graduate studies abroad.

The question sought to clarify if the information was all stored and updated on the date of departure abroad, or if a follow-up was also made while they were in the foreign HEI, that is, during the program. Besides, there was a concern to identify if there was a follow-up or registration afterward when returning to the home institution. The results obtained were as follows:

Chart 3. Moment of recorded information



Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

As shown in Chart 3, the previous record is held 100% of the time, that is, it is evident the value assigned to the information of the academic dimension and in parts of the administrative dimension; because, primarily, in the previous moment occurs the systematization of elements related to the open calls for academic mobility, the choice of the destination institution, basic data of the student, selection or approval of the student according to the pre-established requirements, courses and subjects to be taken and validated (STALLIVIERI, 2017).

According to Conroy and McCarthy (2019) and Stallivieri (2017), this supervision by the local education management helps preventively in achieving the success of the academic mobility program of the individual.

Although many global Higher Education Institutions still do not give due relevance to the experience of their students abroad, because they do not believe it interferes with the quality indices of Higher Education (TEICHLER, 2017); it is known that the success of the student's academic mobility is essential for their development and to attract new participants through the dissemination and sharing of experiences among them (BUKOWSKI, 2020; CONROY; MCCARTHY, 2019; LUZ, 2020; MITTELMEIER, 2019).

Although 50% of the HEIs answered that they carry out information updates throughout the student's journey, from joining the program until his/her return, when evaluating the type of systematized information, or what types of data are stored regarding the exchanges, it was found that information related to the academic dimension is indeed systematized 100% of the time. According to Stallivieri (2017), this type of information involves the data of the destination and origin HEIs, the adhesion contracts, registration, and information from both the student and the HEIs.

However, other informational groups are precariously registered, such as factors related to the student's personal logistics, the address of the residence abroad, the health system of the destination region, typical eating habits of each place and daily commuting;

culture of the country and the destination HEI, regional characteristics, peculiarities, places to visit, preparation for multicultural environments; linguistic, important and necessary languages for the student according to the destination, offering of courses and proficiency tests.

The table below shows which other groups of information are systematized in the interviewed HEIs:

**Table 2.** Types of Registered Information

<b>TYPES OF INFORMATION RECORDED</b>	<b>RECORDING PERCENTAGE</b>
Information related to the student's personal logistics: the place of living abroad, local health, food, and transportation.	10%
Cultural and leisure information: indicated tours and places to visit.	50%
Cultural and behavioral tips in diversified environments: customs, way of life, local culture, habits, respect for differences.	50%
Information related to the linguistic dimension: proficiency tests, places where courses are held in other languages, and the presence of other dialects.	20%

Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

Given the above, one of the major deficiencies in the systematization of information is the absence of a single, dedicated system to store the largest number of informational elements. Sometimes data is lost, and reports cannot be issued to guide the efforts of international relations management.

Although some institutions have computer programs for some academic mobility data, it is still incomplete. The HEIs that have their own online system for the academic mobility student value the existing system, but they understand that it only facilitates the initial moment of the student's adhesion to the edict when he fills in his data and the intention to participate. After that, it is possible to issue some reports to support specific institutional management actions.

Besides, it was observed that the internationalization sector is not sure what to register, and what information would be relevant for the advancement of international academic mobility, for the preparation of the student, and for institutional development. They feel the lack of governmental guidance and practical guidelines in the internationalization process and academic mobility, which collaborates with what was said by Miranda et al. (2019).

That said, information related to the four (4) dimensions substantiated by Stallivieri (2017) must be present: academic, administrative, intercultural, and linguistic. Moreover, it is important that the knowledge acquired is widely disseminated by the student participating in academic mobility programs, both to the managers of the home HEI and to other potential students interested in participating and to society in general.

Given these results, this study presents a theoretical model composed of a proposal of the fundamental informational requirements of academic mobility that need to be systematized to truly achieve the goals set by student exchange programs. The objective is to contribute to and serve as a basis for the structuring of a program or a single system that allows the advancement of the systematization of information from international academic mobility. The following figure represents the essence of what is proposed:

**Figure 1.** Key informational requirements for the systematization of information from international academic mobility



Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

The academic dimension is the part that involves the management of international relations, both at the sending and receiving HEIs, and the teaching management of the courses. The analysis of the compatibility of courses, subjects, curricula, and the possible

validation of credits is the key point of international academic mobility. The student needs to be able to carry out most of what he or she has studied abroad in an official way. At this stage, the role of the professors and course coordinators in verifying the contents and practices carried out is essential.

The internationalization officer needs to be aware of this information and effectively record objective data related to the student and the university he/she is applying to personal and institutional documents required to carry out the process, dates, and deadlines. The Brazilian education system has different dates when compared to other countries, and so it is necessary that the systematization favors and facilitates the progress of the process.

The figure below presents in detail the informational requirements proposed for the academic dimension:

**Figure 2.** Information requirements of the academic dimension



- Information about the HEI, the courses, and the disciplines:
  - a) name, identification of the foreign HEI, and location on the map
  - b) name of the course and subject descriptions
  - c) subject pre-requisites
  - d) duration of the courses and subjects and weekly attendance
  - e) credit validation and compatibility between HEIs (home and destination).
- Information regarding the required documents:
  - a) at the beginning of the process for acceptance into the program, identification, student proof, and minimum requirements are demanded by the exchange announcement.
  - b) passport, student visa application forms (depending on the destination country), and specific documentation required for travel.
  - c) declarations and certificates issued by the local HEI and required by the foreign HEI for the student's adhesion to the program and at the destination institution.
  - d) documents proving the completion of courses and participation in extracurricular courses to be delivered for validation at the local HEI upon return to the home country.
  - e) other documents required for the effectiveness and completion of the student in the international academic mobility program.
- Institutional contact information and setting in the host HEI:
  - a) details of the coordinator or international relations representative
  - b) details of the professors of the course or subjects to be taken
  - c) local contact in case of emergency or doubts about the foreign HEI

Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

According to the interviewees' reports, there are frequent situations of students who, when they are at the HEI abroad, become interested in other disciplines and enroll in them, carrying out exchanges. Because of this, it is essential that there is monitoring and systematization of information at the moment "during" the exchange, so that the student can be guided in the best possible way and avoid frustration on his/her return because of the high rate of failure to take advantage of subjects.

This statement is also directly related to the administrative dimension because the information between HEIs needs to be transmitted with quality promptly and in the ideal



quantity, so that the student can be given the minimum conditions to prepare for the academic mobility program.

The informational requirements of the administrative dimension are discussed in the following figure:

**Figure 3.** Informational requirements of the administrative dimension



- Information about the partnerships and agreements signed:
  - a) list of countries and existing partner HEIs
  - b) general characteristics and peculiarities of each one of them (availability of webpages and other social media of the foreign HEIs)
  - c) registration of suggestions from students or interest in other locations and HEIs besides the agreed ones
- Availability of "reviews" made by former participants of the program with reports a respeito da IES anfitriã e dos cursos realizados:
  - a) detailed information about the positive aspects of the experience
  - b) detailed information about the negative points and implications caused in daily life
  - c) tips and suggestions related to foreign HEIs: how, where, and how to search for certain information in specific situations
- Logistics information, related to daily life:
  - a) housing: where to look for, documents and financial resources necessary to carry out the rentals, places or neighborhoods that are cheaper and/or closer to the destination HEI, websites or search tools, and market value (note: if the student already has a place to live, record the address and contact details of people who live with him/her)
  - b) transportation: transportation commonly used in that community, presence of bike lanes, buses, trains, carpooling system, and applications for students and the general population
  - c) commerce of general goods and medication: indication of local stores and markets that have basic food products, clothing, items of common and daily use, and reliable pharmacies to buy medication in case of need
  - d) health: hospitals nearby, medical clinics, public health system, or one that accepts the health insurance contracted by the student
  - e) tips on cultural and leisure places: information on cultural outings, bars, restaurants, places of entertainment and fun for free time
- Report of difficulties experienced in the exchange program: directed to the destination HEI and location.
- Specific suggestions related to the location of the destination HEI for future participants.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

The relevance of the quality and quantity of partnerships and agreements signed with foreign institutions is well defended by Stallivieri (2017). Nevertheless, after the interviews conducted with the sample of this study, it is perceived that students have preferences and desires to go to different locations; and sometimes HEIs present the same agreements with the same countries, for example, from Latin America or Portugal. There is a need for partnership expansion and a better strategy to attract partnerships for future agreements with HEIs abroad.

Knowledge needs to be transmitted for better student preparation (STALLIVIERI, 2017; CONROY; MCCARTHY, 2019; NWABUOKU, 2021). Thus, directed cognitive tools and relevant information necessary to help the student's daily life should be transmitted to them, such as housing, transportation, tips on places to visit during free time and for leisure,

and an indication of a psychology professional in case of need, how the local health system and health insurance work, actions to be taken in emergency situations, are some fundamental elements of orientation for the exchange student.

Another informational requirement that is strictly linked to the destination HEI is the socialization part. HEIS must be aware that the student needs to feel inserted in the academic environment and relate to other students, because it is an intrinsic part of learning, whether through events, regular meetings, reception parties, or routine events. At least at the beginning of the exchange, the university management must mediate this process.

It is through socialization that the intercultural dimension is enhanced. Information about the destination place, culture, customs, religion, and way of life must be systematized and made available to the student. Furthermore, internationalization managers should be concerned with providing information related to values and behavioral principles in multicultural environments to minimize culture shock and negative reactions to cultural differences.

Living amid a plurality of ideas, experiences and conceptions are extremely beneficial when carried out with maturity and professionalism (BADY *et al.*, 2020). It is necessary to train global citizens with the minimum skills required to live in a dynamic world, who can act positively in finding solutions to problems in the academic and professional world and in society in general. The role of university management in the process of educating students should consist precisely in minimizing misinformation and turning its efforts toward the propagation of knowledge.

For this, the informational requirements of the intercultural dimension are presented in detail in the figure below:

**Figure 4.** Informational requirements of the intercultural dimension



- Specific socio-cultural orientations according to the destination:
  - a) behavioral and social interaction tips abroad
  - b) regional customs and habits (of the community and the foreign HEI)
- Preparation for coexistence in multicultural environments and improvement of language skills:
  - a) adaptability
  - b) resilience
  - c) respect and flexibility
  - d) acceptance and empathy
- Guidance about the importance of social insertion during the mobility program and tips for social engagement.
- Information about the habits, beliefs, and values of the local population
- Preparation for solving daily and complex problems and conflicts in different and adverse cultural environments.



Finally, systematizing the information involving a second language, proficiency tests, necessary and recommended requirements, and possible courses offered by the local HEI and abroad are essential actions for success in the international academic mobility program.

The international relations management of Brazilian HEIs must encourage the mastery of a common language so that the student can communicate well, adequately understand the knowledge shared in academic environments, and succeed in tests and educational activities. A language policy must be implemented so that the student can achieve the maximum results that the exchange program can provide.

The linguistic dimension is closely linked to the intercultural one because by mastering the language of his/her new location, the student is likely to be immersed in that culture and to better understand the dynamics of people's daily lives. Students who succeed in this condition of linguistic and cultural insertion return to their home country with an advanced level in the language of general learning and with strongly developed intercultural competencies (STALLIVIERI, 2017).

The following is the representation of the informational requirements related to the linguistic dimension:

**Figure 5.** Informational requirements of the linguistic dimension



- Information about global language proficiency requirements to aid social communication and learning: English is typically the most widely used language for social communications in multicultural environments.
- Information on language communities that offer integration activities for international students.
- Information about the requirement of proficiency in the official language of the foreign HEI.
- Encouragement and promotion of extracurricular language courses to be taken during the program. These may be offered by the foreign HEI, local government, or other organizations.
- Information about online technological tools for foreign language learning.
- Information about dates, fees, and places of application for foreign language proficiency tests.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2022).

So far, the systematization of information is done by the employees of the international relations and education departments of the local and foreign HEIs. However, it is essential that upon returning to his or her country, the student gives feedback to his or her institution. The HEI must extract as much knowledge as possible from everything that the student experienced, did, and participated in.

It is necessary to register all this knowledge, whether in reports, spreadsheets, academic events, or even on social network pages on the web, so that other students, employees, coordinators, managers, and society, in general, understand how international academic mobility works for that institution.

Therefore, we do not want to exhaust the possibilities of improvement for the systematization of information from international academic mobility by the international relations management; neither do we want to consider that the institutional management is not already aware and working for improvement, but we want to contribute with these suggestions, based on the analysis carried out and through the eyes of the different interviewees. The intention is that the internationalization process is strengthened through the concrete use of systematized information that can be used by the entire community.

## Final Considerations

The objective of the study was to analyze how public and community Higher Education Institutions in the State of Santa Catarina systematize the information coming from the international academic mobility programs. It was found that the HEIs use several tools, common ones or programs to record the information. However, only a few informational groups are properly registered.

The justification for this scenario is multiple: the lack of a single effective program that allows better handling of the data and minimizes the loss of information; the lack of employees or professionals in the international relations sector and even the lack of knowledge about what should be captured, systematized and cataloged.

Given the deficiency in the organization and storage of information from the international academic mobility programs, it is unclear to what extent the secretaries can help the Higher Education management to foster quality education. The importance of academic mobility in institutional and academic development is known, but it is not possible to extract current and real data from the results of the process.

A single system to systematize academic mobility information is necessary. Ideally, it should have an interface that can be fed by the student and another that can be fed by employees and managers of the institution. One must take into account the dynamism with which information is spread in contemporary times. It is suggested here that in the implementation of specific software, there is a space where the student who participated in the program at a particular university can evaluate the place, give tips, and tell how the experience was interactive.

It is also recommended that the program stimulates the continuous improvement of exchange partnerships; for example, it uses artifacts such as rankings and opinion surveys by the students. This knowledge, properly structured and disseminated, allows future participants

to be prepared, to choose where to go, and to have a sense of what to expect while they are away from their home country. In other words, the sharing and dissemination of knowledge related to the exchange experiences and the feedback or reviews from participants help prepare the future program participant.

In fact, in contemporary times we observe the search for quality information and the recommendation of other people who have had the opportunity to experience a certain place or have a certain experience. Going to a restaurant, buying a product online, and planning a trip somewhere becomes easier and more accurate when one finds feedback or reviews from other individuals. It is a modern habit, arising from technology, but one that has contributed significantly to the satisfaction and success of people's daily planning.

The interesting thing is that this kind of information can be available online and with open access for anyone. Thus, the dissemination of programs and agreements can be more effective, and attract more interested parties. And with this, it will allow the home institution to maintain quality control over the partnerships signed through periodic evaluations and analysis of updated information provided by the students.

Systematization needs to be done throughout the exchange process: before, during, and after the student's return to the home institution. As seen in the literature review, student preparation is directly related to the achievement of the objectives set with the exchange programs, and many data can be registered and used for the advancement of the program, the internationalization sector, and its management processes, as well as for the students and the institution as a whole. All the knowledge acquired can contribute to strategic planning, by analyzing the current situation and projecting objectives, actions, and improvements for the future.

Through the interviews, it was possible to identify how information is systematized, what types of data are registered, and how it could be improved. It was also possible to finish with a suggestion of information groups that are essential to be cataloged, coming from the academic mobility programs.

The idea is to contribute to the systematization of information from international academic mobility in Higher Education Institutions, and thus there can be progress in internationalization and an increase in the quality of programs, experiences, and institutional partnerships in Higher Education.

Regarding suggestions for future work, one can envision research that looks at the mobility of professors, that is, professors from educational institutions who participate in programs abroad: what academic activities they are developing abroad, the research and results, and what return is given to their institution of origin. This kind of information must not be lost, because growth needs to go from the individual prospectus to the collective: the academic community and university management.

Regarding the fundamental informational requirements proposed at the end of the research, the elaboration was carried out through the literature review and the answers from the interviews. This theoretical model is proposed to serve as a basis for the structuring of a single system of management and systematization of information from exchange programs. However, it should not be limited to these. There may be other information that needs to be properly listed, considering the peculiarities and regionalities of each institution, as well as the type of international mobility program or the profile of the participant: undergraduate or graduate student or faculty of the institution.

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