THE PROCESS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION IN ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS IN RIO DE JANEIRO AND THE NEED OF AFFECTION TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

This research was proposed in order to contribute to the understanding of educational processes at institutions working in the health area in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The present work sought to identify the socialization experienced by foreign students in two academic institutions working with health issues.

It was also intended to analyze the incentives that foreign students have to do programs abroad and how was their reception.
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS AS MIGRANTS

Despite the rapid increase in the flow of international student mobility, this process is relatively neglected in research on migration (King & Raghuram 2013).

However, three or four years to acquire a university degree fits into the conventional statistics of international migration. In addition, many students become migrants.

Brazil occupies an important position in the world economy and has been attracting more foreign students and immigrants.
BRAZILIAN SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION INITIATIVES

• The internationalization of the Brazilian university has always existed, but since 1998 it has been encouraged by UNESCO and increased by internal pedagogical transformations in institutions, new market rules and a large flow of international students (Zamberlam; Corso; Bocchi; Filippin and Külkapm, 2009).

• As of 2001, the focus of Brazilian university cooperation South / South gains renewed prominence. According to Krawczyk (2008, p. 46) in the 21st century there has been in the foreign policy of the Brazilian government, a greater incentive for South/South cooperation, that is, with India, China and Africa; also with Portuguese-speaking countries and Latin America.
In the Brazilian case, international academic cooperation (university and researchers) in the last century promoted exchanges with First World countries, such as Germany, the United States and France.

However, some initiatives took place in the 20th century, showing that Brazil has also invested in academic cooperation from the South to the South.

Since 1965, the Students-Undergraduate Agreement Program (PEC-G) was created for foreign students from developing countries with which Brazil maintains an educational, cultural, scientific and technological agreement.
OTHER INITIATIVES THAT REFLECT THE INCREASE IN BRAZILIAN SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

• The Graduate Agreement Student Program (PEC-PG) created in 1981, has offered scholarships for students from countries with which Brazil has been maintaining agreements, with the objective of training students.
• Brazilian Cooperation Agency.
• Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), in the 90s
• Creation of new institutions with integration concepts, such as:
  • Faculdade União das Américas (Uniamérica), Foz do Iguaçu, since 2001.
  • Federal University of Latin American Integration (Unila) 2007, Foz do Iguaçu.
SOUTH-NORTH COOPERATION PERSISTS

• Brazil has played a leading role in the training of health professionals from other countries, with South-South cooperations, especially with countries in South America or Africa (Pires-Alves, Paiva & Paranaguá de Santana, 2012).

• The Science Without Borders (2011 to 2017) program was aimed at undergraduate and graduate students. In this program there was also an incentive for renowned international researchers to make exchanges in Brazil. This program was supported by the Ministries of Science, Technology and Innovation (MCTI) and the Ministry of Education (MEC), through their respective funding agencies - CNPq and Capes - and higher education and technology departments associated with the Ministry of Education (MEC).
THE MOBILITY OF HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS

The challenges for transforming curricula are enormous. As a conception, health curricula in Brazil have been marked with an emphasis on technology, expertise and procedures and high costs and less focus has been given to the primary health care of the populations. The ethical problems of this emphasis is very serious. Nowadays, the coronavirus pandemic shows that besides the need for new technologies it is pressing primary health care.
THE EMOTIONS OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

One of many symptoms of modernity and globalization is that there are more desires and processes, such as migration, leading to disrupt the sense of locally-based belonging experienced by individuals (Wood and Waite 2011).

Nevertheless, if we consider international students as migrants, the feeling of absence of significant others may be continuous for them and family and friends members left behind. This process demands emotional strategies on the part of them in order to cope with this absence. On the part of educational programs, support is essential.
In the curriculum in action, there is a need for the social actors involved (teachers, workers and students) to value and respect differences, whether these are related to ethnicity, social class, sex, age, religion and nationality. As there is increasing diversity of teachers, workers and students in programs, there is a growing need for constant reflection and adaptation.
QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY

The research methodology is qualitative (Chizotti, 1991), which is adequate to understand the complexity of actions and experiences (institutional and individual).

The results presented here are from participating researches, as the author worked or works in the institutions. Content analysis is used to understand institutional and individual actions. This is a methodological approach that emphasizes communication as being useful for investigating lines (Bardin, 1977).
THE CENTER FOR HEALTH SCIENCES AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF RIO DE JANEIRO

• The Center for Health Sciences (CCS) of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) was created by the university reform of 1967 and implanted in 1969 as Center of Medical Sciences.

• The academic units of this center cover the areas of Biophysics, Biology, Medical Biochemistry, Biomedical Sciences, Ecology, Physical Education, Nursing, Pharmacy, Medicine, Microbiology, Nutrition and Dentistry.
INTERVIEWS AT THE UNIVERSITY

In 2012, two PEC-G coordinators were interviewed at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro and six interviews were conducted with foreign students.

In 2012 there were 32 foreign students from the Health Sciences Center, there were more girls (23) than boys (9). Of these 12, 8 girls and 4 boys have some kind of scholarship or assistance.

In 2014, a graduate of the Biology course at UFRJ (graduation in 2010 and specialization in 2013) was a key informant for research on the acceptance of foreign students by Brazilians.
PERCEPTIONS OF SOME FOREIGN STUDENTS INTERVIEWED FROM ANGOLA, BOLIVIA AND CAPE VERDE AT THE UNIVERSITY

- There is housing difficulty / Lack of accommodation
- Lack of adequate public transport
- There is difficulty with Portuguese language
- There is difficulty in the disciplines, especially in the beginning
- Lack of a truly universal health system in Brazil
- There is greater integration with classmates of the nationality of origin than with Brazilians
- There are opportunities for scholarships to come to Brazil and Brazilian scholarships
- There is help from teachers and classmates
PERCEPTIONS OF ADMINISTRATIVE STAFF AND SOME BRAZILIAN STUDENTS ABOUT FOREIGN CLASSMATES AT THE UNIVERSITY

• Few teachers aware of the issues concerning foreign students.
• Closer contact with administrative staff and teachers than with students. Example. Religion affiliation.
• It is difficult to have housing accommodation.
• There is geographical isolation: getting around is difficult and expensive for foreign students. Transportation costs limits socialization and leisure possibilities in the city.
• Foreign language is limiting for communication and learning.
• Socialization is undermined due to shyness and introspection.
• Socialization is undermined by the schedule of full time program.
• Some students want the Brazilian government to invest more in the Brazilians students.
OSWALDO CRUZ FOUNDATION: FOCUS ON PUBLIC HEALTH

The Oswald Cruz Foundation (Fiocruz) is 120 years old and plays a pioneering role in public health research in Brazil.

The institution has many graduate programs in the areas of Biology, Medicine, Public Health, Humanities and Social Sciences and technical health programs that attract students from other Brazilian and foreign states.

The results presented here focus on the annual welcome receptions held on the institution's main campus in Rio de Janeiro, since 2014 and two interviews with managers and members of the Fiocruz Acolhe [Fiocruz Welcome], one of them also a worker at the Center of International Relations in Health (CRIS) of the institution and graduates of the Biology course at UFRJ, studying at Fiocruz.
The first call for the welcome reception in 2014 was only for foreign students only. The call for the same event in 2015 was for foreign students and other states in Brazil, but favored the registration of other interested parties as well. In the subsequent years, up to 2019, an intimate conversation format was developed so that all shared ideas and concerns.

At most meetings, most of the students enrolled were Brazilian. In decreasing order they were from the Southeast, followed by the Northeast, South, Midwest and North.

The majority of the enrolled students were female, since health area attracts more females. Most were in master programs than doctoral ones.

In the year of 2015 the enrolled international students came from the following eleven countries: Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ethiopia, France, Haiti, Mexico, Mozambique, Paraguay, Portugal and the United States.
PERCEPTIONS AT FIOCRUZ OF ADMINISTRATIVE SRAFF, BRAZILIAN AND FOREIGN STUDENTS OF THEIR STUDENTS’ NEEDS

• Affordable housing.
• Documentation to stay in the country.
• Opening a bank account.
• Cultural adaptation.
• Learning Portuguese language.
• Collective transportation to the institution.
• More affordable restaurants.
• Better knowledge of the research institution.
CONCLUSIONS: SOME STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE TRAINING

• Strategies to foster inclusive education for foreign students depend on the voices of all social actors being valued.

• While Brazilian cooperation in the area of health, underlines the need to build a type of sustainable development in other nations, health training also in Brazil must be concerned with this type of development.

• This work emphasized the views of Brazilian administrative staff and classmates about foreign students in the Biology course at UFRJ and that of Fiocruz administrative staff who promoted a debate by several Brazilian social actors (workers and students) discussing the institution's problems together with foreign classmates.
CONCLUSIONS: SOME STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

• In the case of Oswald Cruz Foundation it is already an inclusive strategy that social actors are discussing the institution's problems together with foreigners. Many proposals have yet to be implemented, such as public transportation for students.

• It is essential to think about problems together (all social actors) and contribute to the necessary changes in receiving and supporting new Brazilian and international students.

• It is of utmost importance to know the initiatives of students, teachers and workers themselves to study, share knowledge and socialize.
CONCLUSIONS: SOME STRATEGIES FOR INCLUSIVE TRAINING

• It was discussed by the administrative staff that although the PEC-G program has existed for years, few teachers were sensitive to the issue of foreign students. One of the strategies is the need to make the curriculum flexible at times to account for the various processes experienced by students.

• The informants argued that, in general, Brazilian students did not have much contact with their foreign classmates due to distant homes and the lack of a fluent knowledge of the Portuguese spoken in Brazil. As a strategy, it is necessary to promote more informal meetings between Brazilians and foreigners talking about problems common to Brazilians and foreigners, such as: needs for accommodation, transportation and maintenance grants.

• Some administrative staff at Fiocruz discussed the need to raise awareness of the issue in the institution.

• Institution must support international students so that they can cope adequately with their emotions.
CONCLUSION: THE NEED OF AFFECTION TO PROMOTE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION

• It was identified that international students face many difficulties. But they did develop strategies to live in Rio de Janeiro.

• While not all students engage in a meaningful educational endeavor, most described their experiences as worthwhile.

• Their agency to live abroad is noteworthy. By describing their historical experiences, some students described feelings of isolation, others highlighted positive affect strategies.

• It was noticed that the students that are more integrated know how to best exchange affection with those they relate. Thus, inclusive and intercultural education to be successful must not only learn the concrete needs of international students but search for strategies that promote affection.
REFERENCES:


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