

**THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF BRAZILIAN BASIC EDUCACION:  
SOCIAL IMPACTS AND OPPORTUNITIES  
LA INTERNACIONALIZACIÓN DE LA EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA Y SECUNDARIA EN  
BRASIL:  
VIABILIDAD, IMPACTOS Y ESTRATEGIAS PARA LA EQUIDAD GLOBAL**

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**ABSTRACT**

**Keywords:**

education, global citizenship  
education, internationalization,  
inclusive education.

The internationalization of basic education has become a key strategy for expanding equitable access to educational, cultural, and professional opportunities worldwide. In the Brazilian context, this practice has historically been restricted to higher education, especially within elite institutions. However, this article examines the feasibility and impacts of expanding internationalization into primary and secondary education in Brazil, aiming to make it a driver of social justice. A qualitative methodology was adopted, based on document analysis, literature review, and the author's empirical experience in implementing internationalization programs in higher education. The proposed framework is structured around six interdependent components: teacher training, revision of political-pedagogical projects, creation of cooperation networks, implementation of exchange programs, inclusion of the local community, and the development of financing strategies. The research findings indicate that adopting intercultural pedagogical practices and aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4) can promote the democratization of internationalization, strengthen global competencies among children and youth, and enhance the appreciation of cultural diversity within the school environment. The conclusion is that the internationalization of primary and secondary education is not only feasible but also necessary, provided it is guided by principles of equity, pedagogical responsibility, and alignment with national and international educational policies. In this context, the school becomes a societal agent and a promoter of inclusive global citizenship.

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**RESUMEN**

**Palabras clave:**

educación, ciudadanía global, internacionalización, educación inclusiva.

La internacionalización de la educación primaria y secundaria se ha consolidado como una estrategia clave para ampliar el acceso equitativo a oportunidades educativas, culturales y profesionales en todo el mundo. En el contexto brasileño, esta práctica ha estado históricamente restringida al nivel superior, especialmente en instituciones de élite. Sin embargo, este artículo analiza la viabilidad y los impactos de su expansión hacia la educación primaria y secundaria en Brasil, con el objetivo de convertirla en un motor de justicia social. Se adoptó una metodología cualitativa, basada en análisis documental, revisión bibliográfica y la experiencia empírica de la autora en la implementación de programas de internacionalización en la educación superior. La propuesta se estructura en seis componentes interdependientes: formación docente, revisión de los proyectos político-pedagógicos, creación de redes de cooperación, realización de intercambios, inclusión de la comunidad local y definición de estrategias de financiamiento. Los resultados de la investigación indican que la adopción de prácticas pedagógicas interculturales y la articulación con los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible (ODS4) pueden promover la democratización de la internacionalización, el fortalecimiento de competencias globales en niños y jóvenes, y la valorización de la diversidad cultural en el entorno escolar. Se concluye que la internacionalización de la educación primaria y secundaria no solo es viable, sino también necesaria, siempre que esté guiada por principios de equidad, responsabilidad pedagógica y alineación con las políticas educativas nacionales e internacionales. En este contexto, la escuela se convierte en un agente de la sociedad y promotora de una ciudadanía global inclusiva.

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## **Introduction**

The internationalization of education has become a key strategy for addressing the challenges of an increasingly interconnected, diverse, and complex world. Traditionally focused on higher education, this trend has begun to expand into primary and secondary education, especially in countries such as Brazil, where significant structural inequalities in access to global educational opportunities persist (Mataluna, 2023; Sahlin & Styf, 2021). Basic education, as the foundation of citizens' education, represents a strategic arena for fostering global competencies, social inclusion, and sustainable development from the earliest stages of schooling (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2018).

The magnitude of the problem becomes clear when one considers that more than 80% of Brazilian students are enrolled in public schools (IBGE, 2021). However, internationalization efforts at this educational level are still in their early stages and are largely limited to private, elite, or bilingual institutions, which reinforces social and educational segregation (Mataluna, 2023). This reality limits the transformative potential of schools as agents of social justice and preparation for global citizenship, creating a significant gap in access to educational experiences that, in other contexts, are already recognized as essential.

This issue cannot be underestimated or considered peripheral in contemporary educational discussions. The lack of access to internationalization programs in public elementary and secondary schools is not a minor or marginal problem, but rather a structural issue with far-reaching consequences. If immediate action is not taken, the medium- and long-term consequences will directly affect the ability of millions of Brazilian children and young people to develop critical thinking, intercultural, and global problem-solving skills. This exclusion will limit their academic, professional, and personal paths, in addition to negatively impacting the country's competitiveness, its capacity for innovation, and its integration into the international arena.

Furthermore, this gap reproduces and amplifies historical inequalities, since while economic elites have access to educational models that include global curricula, multilingual instruction, international exchange, and intercultural experiences from early childhood onward, the majority of students in the public school system remain confined to national pedagogical frameworks, disconnected from global flows of knowledge, culture, and innovation (Mataluna, 2023). The absence of these processes in public education not only perpetuates inequality but also prevents these students from gaining access to the cultural, social, and linguistic capital that is now essential for their integration into the 21st-century workforce, academia, and society.

Sahlin and Styf (2021) emphasize that internationalization should not be viewed solely as a strategy for external collaboration, but rather as a fundamental pillar for strengthening schools' internal capacities. In their study, they demonstrate that when internationalization is incorporated as an integral part of school culture, it contributes significantly to teachers' professional development, distributed leadership, continuous improvement, and the creation of learning environments that are more collaborative, inclusive, and open to the world.

On the other hand, multilateral organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) emphasize that internationalization should be understood as an educational right, essential for shaping citizens capable of addressing current and future global challenges (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2018). Ignoring

this aspect of basic education ultimately reinforces structures of exclusion, closes doors to opportunities for development, and limits the formation of citizens capable of acting locally with a global perspective.

However, there are international examples that show it is possible to implement internationalization processes in an inclusive and sustainable manner. In Finland, the national curriculum incorporates intercultural competence as a cross-cutting theme starting in early childhood education, promoting respect for diversity and global awareness. In Canada, the model of multilingual and multicultural schools is aligned with federal integration policies, while in Spain and Chile, regulatory frameworks have been established to promote internationalization at home, with an emphasis on active learning methodologies, international collaborative projects, and the use of digital technologies (Sahlin & Styf, 2021; OECD, 2018).

These experiences show that internationalization should not be limited to physical mobility programs, but should be integrated across the board into the school curriculum, teacher training, and institutional culture. This ranges from developing collaborative projects with schools in other countries to incorporating content that promotes intercultural understanding, language learning, and addressing global issues such as sustainability, equity, and peace (Knight, 2004; Morosini, 2011).

In the Brazilian context, internationalization initiatives in public elementary and secondary education are still in their early stages and are, for the most part, limited to private or elite institutions. This reality limits the transformative potential of schools as agents of social justice and underscores the need to democratize access to international experiences, integrating them into political-pedagogical projects in a cross-cutting and culturally contextualized manner. However, the viability of the internationalization process is based on factors that are becoming increasingly well-established. On the one hand, advances in digital technologies make it possible to overcome traditional physical barriers, facilitating the development of virtual and collaborative internationalization experiences. On the other hand, there is an emerging but significant effort by the Ministry of Education itself (MEC, 2022) to develop guidelines for the internationalization of basic education, which opens up opportunities for its implementation in a more structured and democratic manner. Furthermore, increasing access to theoretical frameworks, international best practices, and methodological resources enhances the potential to conduct robust research that is applicable to the national context.

However, various international experiences have shown that internationalization can be implemented in an inclusive manner within public school systems. For example, in Finland, the national curriculum incorporates intercultural competence as a cross-cutting theme starting in early childhood education, promoting respect for diversity and global awareness. In Canada, the model of multilingual and multicultural schools is linked to federal integration policies, while in Spain and Chile, regulatory frameworks have been developed to promote “internationalization at home,” with an emphasis on active learning methodologies, international collaborative projects, and the use of digital technologies. The success of internationalization processes depends on the existence of sustained public policies, adequate funding, ongoing training for teachers in global competencies, and the ability to adapt international models—both culturally and pedagogically—to the Brazilian context, which is characterized by its heterogeneity and deep inequalities (Mataluna, 2023; Sahlin & Styf, 2021). Furthermore, there is a risk that, without a strong institutional commitment, internationalization will become a practice dependent on individual leaders, which jeopardizes its long-term sustainability.

Similarly, multilateral organizations such as UNESCO and the OECD have, in recent years, emphasized the need to incorporate the international and intercultural dimensions

at all levels of education. The OECD's Global Competencies Framework (2018) and SDG 4 of the 2030 Agenda promote a vision of education centered on equity, sustainability, peace, and global citizenship. In this regard, internationalization can no longer be limited to physical mobility or foreign language learning; rather, it must be deeply integrated into institutional culture, teacher training, and the school curriculum.

In this context, Brazil's public elementary and secondary schools are strategic and urgent venues for democratizing access to internationalization and, in doing so, contributing to the development of global citizens who are critical thinkers, show solidarity, and are capable of acting effectively in an interdependent world. This challenge is not only educational, but also ethical, social, and political.

Against this backdrop, this article—based on a master's thesis—aims to analyze the feasibility of implementing internationalization processes in Brazil's public elementary and secondary education systems. This research is based on the recognition that internationalization can help broaden educational horizons, develop intercultural skills, and promote critical and socially responsible citizenship. To this end, the study employs a qualitative methodology based on document analysis, a review of the literature, and the systematization of the author's empirical experience. This paper is organized into the following sections: the methodology used, the main results of the study, a discussion of these findings in light of the theoretical framework, and, finally, the conclusions that summarize the research's contributions, highlighting limitations and suggestions for future studies.

## **Method**

### ***Methodological Approach***

In line with Creswell's (2014) proposal, a qualitative approach was chosen, as it allows for the exploration and understanding of the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to a social or human problem. Given the emerging nature of the phenomenon [...], an exploratory and descriptive design proved to be the most appropriate. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), this approach is ideal for investigating complex phenomena in their natural settings, allowing us to understand not only what happens, but also how and why it happens.

This approach is justified because it makes it possible to capture meanings, processes, and dynamics that cannot be objectively quantified, especially when dealing with topics that have not yet been sufficiently systematized in the scientific literature. Such is the case with internationalization in Brazilian basic education, a field still in its early stages of development, with few applied studies conducted in public school settings.

### ***Sources of Information***

The analysis drew on three main types of sources:

- **Official and Regulatory Documents:** The study included national public policies, guidelines from Brazil's Ministry of Education, curriculum frameworks, educational institutions' policy and pedagogical plans, and international documents such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the OECD's global competencies framework.
- **Specialized Bibliography:** We consulted academic articles, theses, books, and scientific publications—both national and international—focusing on educational internationalization, global education, teacher training, and

inclusion policies. Notable contributions include those by Knight (2004), Morosini (2011), Finardi and Rojo (2015), and Lima (2019), among others.

- **Systematization of Empirical Experience:** The empirical experience gained in coordinating internationalization programs was incorporated into an institutional project for internationalization in Brazilian higher education. This project was implemented across the board, encompassing all of the university's programs, and structured to integrate the various dimensions of the internationalization process: faculty development, inter-institutional agreements, mobility programs, internationalization at home, and curriculum alignment with global competencies. As part of this project, the author also served as an institutional ambassador in Europe, with the responsibility of representing the institution and coordinating internationalization efforts in collaboration with international academic partners. This role allowed him to interact directly with multilateral cooperation networks, understand European regulatory frameworks, and adapt best practices to the Brazilian context. The success of this initiative not only strengthened the institutional internationalization policy at the home university but also served as a model for other educational institutions within the same educational group in Brazil, which replicated its strategies, methodologies, and management structures. This practical experience provided a valuable empirical foundation for the present study, making it possible to develop proposals tailored to the realities of basic education, based on experiences that have already been validated in higher education.

### ***Analysis Procedure***

The data processing was carried out in several complementary stages:

- *Document Collection* - This involved selecting, classifying, and organizing relevant sources. Priority was given to public and accessible documents, as well as relevant institutional experiences. The main criterion was relevance to the subject of study.
- *Thematic Analysis* - An inductive thematic analysis was conducted to identify patterns of meaning, regularities, and emerging categories. The content was coded by identifying keywords, recurring phrases, and common themes in the reviewed texts. This process made it possible to create an interpretive map that guided the subsequent discussion.
- *Methodological Triangulation* —With the aim of strengthening the internal validity of the study, triangulation was performed among the various sources: documents, theory, and empirical experience. This strategy made it possible to compare perspectives and deepen our understanding of the phenomenon from multiple angles.
- *Category Refinement* - In a final stage, the coded data were reviewed to clarify, consolidate, and reorganize the analytical categories. This refinement was carried out iteratively, combining thematic analysis with critical interpretation, which led to the identification of six key dimensions for analyzing internationalization in basic education.

### ***Methodological Design***

The study is based on a non-experimental design, a category defined by leading authors such as Hernández Sampieri et al. (2014) and Creswell (2014) define it as research conducted without deliberately manipulating the variables. In this type of

design, the researcher simply observes and analyzes phenomena as they occur in their natural context. The methodological strategy is based on documentary analysis and a literature review, supplemented by a systematization of the author's empirical experiences during the implementation of an internationalization program at a Brazilian educational institution.

### ***Data Collection Techniques and Tools***

The literature review focused on sources published between 2004 and 2022, to allow for an analysis of both foundational works and cutting-edge research. The time frame begins with the publication of Knight's (2004) seminal article, considered a turning point in the field of internationalization studies, and extends to the present day to capture the most recent developments. The study included scientific articles, reports from multilateral organizations, and key regulatory frameworks for the internationalization of education. Priority was given to studies that address both the Brazilian context and international experiences, with an emphasis on theoretical, practical, and comparative approaches.

Among the leading scholars in this field are Knight (2004) and Morosini (2011), who provide the conceptual foundations and analyze the institutionalization of internationalization. At the national level, Finardi and Rojo (2015) examine the role of language and inequality, while Lima (2019) discusses strategies applicable to basic education. This framework is complemented by Teixeira (2022), who focuses on equity and public systems, and by authors such as Sahlberg (2011) and Schleicher (2018), who provide benchmark models from countries such as Finland and Canada. In addition, key documents such as the Global Competencies Framework (OECD, 2018), the Education at a Glance (OECD, 2019), and the Incheon Declaration (UNESCO, 2015) were incorporated.

The combination of document analysis, a literature review, and empirical experience strengthens the study's robustness. The literature review provided insight into Brazilian regulatory frameworks, such as the National Parameters for the Internationalization of Primary Education (MEC, 2022), and international commitments such as SDG 4, identifying gaps, challenges, and opportunities for effective and sustainable internationalization.

For its part, the literature review provided a robust theoretical foundation by integrating concepts, models, and experiences of internationalization applied to diverse contexts, which facilitated the adaptation of strategies to the Brazilian basic education sector.

The empirical experience gained in coordinating internationalization programs in higher education provides a practical perspective, making it possible to translate theoretical frameworks into viable and context-specific actions. This experience deepened our understanding of operational challenges and helped us identify sustainable solutions.

Beyond their methodological function, the choice of these three approaches reflects a commitment to democratizing access to internationalization. In a country marked by deep inequalities, providing children and young people in public schools with educational experiences that offer a global perspective means broadening horizons, breaking down social barriers, and creating real opportunities for development.

### ***Analysis Categories***

To organize and interpret the findings, six key categories of analysis were established, based on the intersection of the reviewed theory, the author's professional practice, and the documents analyzed:

1. Institutional Management and Public Policy
2. International Cooperation Networks
3. Bilingualism and the Multilingual Curriculum
4. Community Participation
5. Teacher Training in Global Competencies
6. Economic, technical, and pedagogical feasibility

### ***Variables Analyzed***

In order to organize and understand the findings, the following key variables were identified:

- Prioritizing internationalization in public and institutional management.
- Existence of inter-institutional agreements and exchange programs.
- Degree of implementation of bilingualism and use of global curricula.
- Local community participation in international activities.
- Teacher Training in Global and Intercultural Competencies.
- Technical, social, economic, and environmental feasibility of internationalization projects.

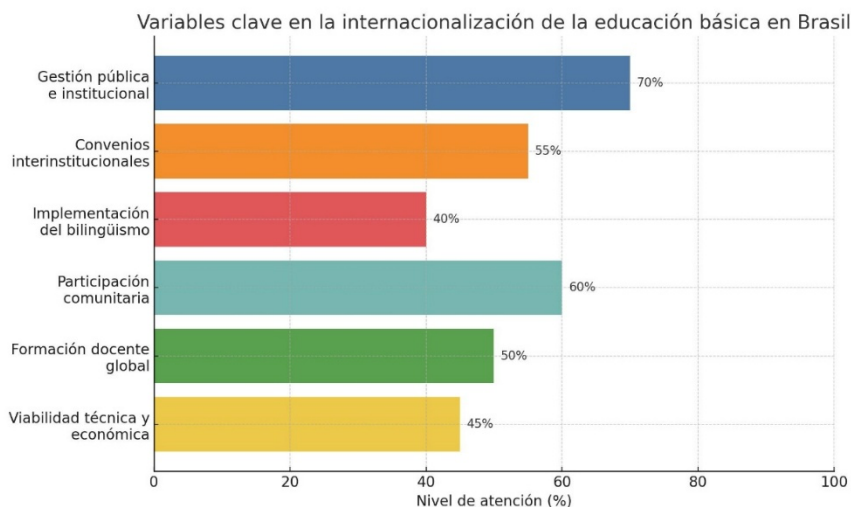
In order to systematically organize, analyze, and understand the findings obtained throughout the research, we identified a set of key variables that allow us to assess the current state of and challenges facing internationalization in Brazilian elementary education. These variables emerge from both the documentary analysis and the literature review, as well as from empirical experience, and serve as analytical frameworks that reflect the multiple dimensions shaping internationalization processes in the school context. These areas cover a wide range of topics, including the following:

- The priorities set by government agencies and educational institutions.
- The existence of inter-institutional agreements and exchange programs.
- The implementation of bilingual practices and the adoption of curricula with a global focus.
- The active participation of the local community in international activities.
- The assessment of the technical, social, economic, and environmental feasibility of projects.

Considering these variables together allows us not only to map the level of progress in each dimension, but also to understand the interrelationships among them and their impact on the development of an education system aimed at shaping global, critical-thinking citizens who are committed to addressing the challenges of the contemporary world. Figure 1 provides a visual summary of these key variables and their estimated level of attention in the Brazilian context.

### **Figure 1**

*Key variables in the internationalization of primary education in Brazil, according to the study's methodological approach.*



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### **Analysis Criteria**

The data were analyzed using a methodological triangulation approach that combined the theoretical framework, the reviewed documents, and empirical evidence. This triangulation made it possible to identify patterns, contradictions, and opportunities within the process of internationalization in elementary education, ensuring a holistic and contextualized view of the phenomenon.

The methodological triangulation consisted of cross-referencing documentary and bibliographic sources and systematizing professional experience. The data were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, identifying categories that emerged and were linked to internationalization. In this context, the discussion focused on the empirical experience in designing the university's internationalization process, as well as its implementation and management.

Through this methodological approach, several priority topics were identified, which arose from the specific needs of exchange students and the realities of the international agreements established by the institution.

Furthermore, ethical criteria were applied in the management of sources, respecting the intellectual authorship of the materials consulted and ensuring the academic validity of the data interpreted.

## **Results**

Six key variables were identified that are considered essential to address: public management priorities, institutional priorities, inter-institutional agreements, bilingualism, international programs, and social activities. Each of these variables is a key pillar for consolidating effective internationalization processes in Brazilian basic education, as demonstrated by the study.

One of the key aspects identified was the importance of peer support programs (buddy programs), which are essential for the effective implementation of an

internationalization project. These programs help international students integrate into the host country's academic and cultural environment by creating support networks and helping them adjust.

In addition, it was noted that evaluations of international agreements are predominantly unilateral. This is because, for these agreements to be truly effective, they must not be strictly bilateral, in order to avoid ambiguities in the academic process at both the home university and the host university. Because they are unilateral, these evaluations ensure that the program's standards and requirements are met clearly and consistently, minimizing potential conflicts of interpretation.

1. **Public Management Priority:** The research reveals that the commitment and planning of public authorities are key factors in the viability of internationalization projects in elementary schools. The level of budget allocation, the frequency of strategic meetings, and the participation of education administrators in global networks emerge as significant indicators. It was found that where local governments truly prioritize these issues, the implementation of international practices is more structured and sustainable.

2. **Institutional Priority:** The study highlights the leading role that schools themselves play in fostering an organizational culture geared toward internationalization. Institutions that allocate specific resources, encourage the ongoing professional development of their teachers, and set clear goals within their institutional educational plans make greater progress in integrating global competencies into their daily practices. Initiatives originating in the school environment have proven to be an effective driver of change, even in the face of external challenges.

3. **Inter-institutional Agreements:** Cooperation between Brazilian and foreign schools is one of the most promising pillars of effective internationalization. The research highlights the positive impact of dual-degree programs, curriculum alignment, and bilateral student exchange programs. These agreements not only diversify access to global content, but also promote mutual recognition of teaching practices, thereby strengthening a collaborative learning network.

4. **Bilingualism:** Proficiency in foreign languages, especially English, serves as a gateway to global citizenship. The study documents successful cases in which bilingual programs enabled graduates to continue their international career paths. Bilingualism, in addition to being a practical skill, promotes inclusion and equity by breaking down cultural and communication barriers.

5. **International Programs:** Student and teacher exchanges, as well as technology-mediated collaborative projects, yielded significant results in terms of student learning, motivation, and future prospects. The author emphasizes that even in times of financial constraints, it is possible to adopt "internationalization at home" strategies, promoting exposure to other cultures without the need for physical travel.

6. **Social Activities:** Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of initiatives that connect the local community with the school's international dimension. From the adoption of multilingual signage in public spaces to participation in international artistic and cultural projects, a transformation in the community environment is evident. Internationalization, therefore, has far-reaching social impacts, promoting intercultural coexistence and strengthening the social fabric. Table 1 below summarizes these six key variables and outlines the main findings observed for each of them.

**Table 1**

*Key Variables for Internationalization in Brazilian Basic Education and Their Main Findings.*

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Description of the Observed Results</b>
<b>Priority of Public Administration</b>	Significant progress was identified in contexts where there was budget allocation, strategic planning, and a commitment by managers to international initiatives.
<b>Institutional Priority</b>	Institutions with educational programs focused on internationalization showed greater participation in bilingual programs, continuing teacher education, and global cooperation.
<b>Inter-institutional Agreements</b>	Establishing partnerships with foreign institutions promoted curriculum harmonization, academic mobility, and cultural exchange.
<b>Bilingualism</b>	Foreign language programs led to an increase in the number of graduates pursuing international careers and to the development of global competencies.
<b>International Programs</b>	Exchanges and collaborative projects—including virtual ones—increased student and faculty engagement, promoting internationalization at home.
<b>Social Activities</b>	Community initiatives, such as multilingual signage and cultural events, contributed to inclusion, a sense of belonging, and the celebration of diversity.

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The findings from the documentary analysis, literature review, and systematization of empirical experiences indicate that the process of internationalization in Brazilian elementary education is still in its early stages. Despite isolated initiatives, mainly in private institutions, there are marked inequalities in access to global opportunities in public schools, as well as structural limitations that hinder the implementation of sustainable policies.

It should be noted that this article is also based on the findings and reflections presented in the author's master's thesis, which focused on developing viable proposals for the internationalization of primary education based on her practical experience in higher education. This empirical foundation made it possible to identify patterns, institutional gaps, and opportunities for adapting international models to the Brazilian context.

One of the most significant findings was the lack of a consolidated strategic plan in the public school systems. Internationalization efforts, when they exist, are fragmented, with no coordination among levels of government and no specific regulatory framework for primary education. This finding was confirmed both by an analysis of official documents and by the field experience described in the master's thesis.

Based on the identification of the six key variables that are considered essential to the success of the internationalization process at the basic level, these dimensions made it possible to map out the strengths, limitations, and opportunities present in the current context. This figure illustrates the estimated level of institutional attention that these variables currently receive, based on a qualitative analysis of the collected data and the author's empirical experience. This analysis illustrates how these dimensions are prioritized within the institutional context, offering a clear perspective on the challenges and opportunities for strengthening internationalization in basic education. The results suggest that the most developed areas are institutional management (70%), followed by community participation (60%) and teacher training (50%). In contrast, the areas showing the least progress include the implementation of bilingualism (40%) and

economic viability (45%), which underscores the need for greater public investment and institutional innovation in these strategic areas.

Table 2 below summarizes the key findings, organized by each of the previously defined analytical categories.

**Table 2**

*Key categories and main findings regarding the challenges of internationalization in Brazilian basic education.*

Category	Key Finding
<b>Public and Institutional Management</b>	Lack of structured public policies for elementary education
<b>Agreements and Networks</b>	Lack of international coordination in public schools
<b>Bilingualism</b>	Limited presence, concentrated in private settings
<b>Community Participation</b>	High potential, but still underutilized
<b>Teacher Training</b>	Urgent Need for Training in Intercultural Skills
<b>Feasibility and Financing</b>	Lack of specific funding; reliance on external resources

*Note.* Adapted from [Title omitted for peer review]. Author (2025). Copyright 2025 by the European University of the Atlantic and empirical experience.

In addition to the gaps identified, specific proposals for action were identified based on the systematized experience with internationalization programs in higher education. These were adapted to the context of elementary and secondary education and gave rise to a preliminary model consisting of six interdependent structural components. Its purpose is to serve as a practical guide for schools interested in launching or strengthening internationalization processes in a context-specific manner. Table 3 details the components of this proposed model, its main objectives, and the suggested actions for its implementation.

**Table 3**

*Components of the proposed model for internationalization in elementary and secondary education.*

Component	Main Objective	Suggested Actions
<b>Teacher Training</b>	Training Teachers in Global and Intercultural Competencies	Continuing education courses, educational workshops, certifications
<b>Political-Educational Project</b>	Incorporating an international perspective into the school curriculum	Curriculum Review, Integration of Global Issues and the SDGs
<b>Cooperation Networks</b>	Establish partnerships with national and international institutions	Agreements, collaborative projects, school partnerships
<b>Exchanges and Experiences</b>	To promote contact with other cultures and ways of life	Virtual or in-person exchanges; participation in international trade shows and events
<b>Community Participation</b>	Involve families and community stakeholders in the development of the project	Extracurricular activities, cultural forums, open houses
<b>Sustainable Financing</b>	Ensure that resources are available to keep the process moving forward	Public funds, international cooperation, partnerships with NGOs and the private sector

The model is flexible and intended as a guide, allowing it to be adapted to different school settings. It is intended to serve as a practical and strategic guide for developing internationalization plans at the elementary school level, always taking into account the sociocultural, institutional, and economic context of each school.

Taken together, these findings confirm that, while there is growing recognition of the importance of internationalization in elementary education, significant barriers that limit its scope still remain. However, the existence of successful initiatives and the recent development of guiding frameworks, such as the National Parameters for the Internationalization of Primary Education (MEC, 2022), indicate that conditions are favorable for moving toward a more inclusive and sustainable policy.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

The findings presented in this study confirm that, although internationalization has been a priority in Brazilian higher education, it has not yet been adequately incorporated into primary and secondary education, particularly in the public school systems. This structural deficiency creates a significant barrier to children's and young people's access to comprehensive educational experiences, perpetuating the system's historical inequalities and limiting the school's social role as an agent of change.

An analysis of the key categories—institutional management, cooperation networks, bilingualism, community participation, teacher training, and financial sustainability—reveals a fragmentation of initiatives, a lack of specific public policies, and a reliance on isolated individual or institutional efforts. However, concrete opportunities are also emerging, especially when internationalization is viewed as a pedagogical, cross-cutting, and context-specific process that goes beyond academic mobility.

Consistent with the findings of Sahlin and Styf (2021), the failure to integrate internationalization into the institutional culture of schools leads to this process being viewed more as a peripheral project than as an essential component of school improvement. Their case study demonstrates that when internationalization is incorporated as a strategy for strengthening internal capacities, it not only impacts teachers' professional development and distributed leadership, but also enhances collaboration, pedagogical innovation, and teaching-and-learning processes. This perspective is particularly relevant in the Brazilian context, where public schools can and should be viewed as active agents in fostering global citizenship, rather than merely reproducing parochial or nationalist educational frameworks.

With regard to cooperation networks, the data show that these are virtually nonexistent among Brazilian public elementary schools. Unlike the models implemented in Finland, Canada, or Chile, where schools actively participate in formal international networks, in Brazil these initiatives are limited to isolated projects, which often lack continuity or alignment with educational policy initiatives (Sahlin & Styf, 2021). This disconnect highlights the urgent need to build platforms for international cooperation that are also accessible to public education.

With regard to bilingualism and the use of global curricula, significant disparities have been identified. While bilingualism is widely promoted in Brazilian private education, it remains the exception in public education. This limitation deprives students of access not only to a second language, but also to cultural, epistemological, and cognitive frameworks that would enable them to interact with the world more critically and effectively (Mataluna, 2023). The lack of curricula with a global perspective also limits

opportunities to integrate topics related to sustainability, human rights, peace, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Community participation is a strategic element, but one that is underutilized. Public schools, being deeply embedded in their local communities, have enormous potential to promote internationalization processes that are not only external but also internal, by valuing the cultural diversity present in their communities. This dimension, strongly emphasized by both Sahlin and Styf (2021) and UNESCO (2021), shows that internationalization should not be understood solely as a relationship with “the outside world,” but also as a process of critical reflection on the community itself, its connections to the world, and its role in global citizenship.

One of the most critical issues identified is teacher training, a pillar whose fragility threatens the sustainability of the entire process. The research confirms that teachers' lack of training in global and intercultural competencies is one of the main barriers to the effective implementation of internationalization in basic education. This empirical finding echoes the early concerns of Knight (2004), who had already warned that, without an institutional commitment to faculty professional development, internationalization initiatives risk being merely cosmetic.

Along these same lines, as Mataluna (2023) and Sahlin and Styf (2021) forcefully argue, without a teaching staff that is well-prepared, aware, and committed to a global education, any attempt becomes a superficial and unsustainable effort. Therefore, education must go beyond the mere mastery of foreign languages. As suggested in the OECD's (2018) guidelines on global competencies, it is imperative to develop the ability to work with active learning methodologies, promote genuine intercultural education, address global problem-solving in the classroom, and use technology to facilitate international collaboration. The absence of this comprehensive approach, as noted, relegates internationalization to an unfulfilled promise in the context of public schools.

Ultimately, the technical, social, economic, and environmental feasibility of the process appears to be a constant source of tension. Although the literature and international experiences show that internationalization can be implemented even with limited resources—especially through internationalization at home, the use of technology, and virtual networks—in the Brazilian context, severe limitations persist in terms of funding, technological infrastructure, faculty workload, and the lack of clear and sustainable public policies (Mataluna, 2023).

Despite this complex assessment, the research identifies clear opportunities for progress. First, adopting a model that views internationalization as a comprehensive educational process—rather than a one-time mobility initiative—makes it possible to overcome many of the current barriers. This model, proposed based on a systematization of the author's empirical experience, is structured around six interdependent components: teacher training, review of political-pedagogical projects, creation of cooperation networks, implementation of exchanges (both in-person and virtual), involvement of the local community, and definition of funding strategies.

This approach is in line with the recommendations of Sahlin and Styf (2021), who demonstrate that when internationalization is linked to the development of internal capacities, schools not only improve pedagogically but also strengthen their social role as spaces for fostering global citizenship, equity, sustainability, and social justice. Furthermore, empirical evidence shows that internationalization, when properly implemented, acts as a catalyst for educational innovation, community cohesion, and teacher professional development.

Consequently, this research reaffirms that the internationalization of Brazilian primary and secondary education is not only feasible but also constitutes an ethical,

social, and pedagogical imperative. Its implementation can serve as a strategic vehicle for transforming public schools into spaces for educating global citizens who are critical thinkers, empathetic, and committed to building a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. However, its consolidation urgently requires clear regulatory frameworks, adequate funding, ongoing teacher training, institutional support, and sustained political will at all levels of the education system.

### ***Limitations of the Study***

Among the limitations of this study is the lack of quantitative and systematic data on internationalization in Brazilian elementary and secondary education, particularly in the public school system. Furthermore, most existing studies focus on the university setting, which makes a direct comparison difficult. The qualitative and exploratory nature of this study also imposes limitations on the generalizability of its findings, although it provides a solid foundation for the design of educational policies and programs.

### ***Proposals for Continuity***

As a follow-up, it is recommended to conduct case studies in different regional contexts across the country, implement the proposed model in pilot schools, and evaluate the results in terms of its educational and community impact. It is also suggested that inter-institutional research networks be established to monitor successful initiatives and strengthen public policies that align internationalization with national curriculum frameworks and multilateral commitments, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 4 and 17).

In summary, the findings of this study confirm that the internationalization of Brazilian elementary education goes beyond the mere implementation of bilingual programs or cultural exchanges. As suggested, the data show that when guided by principles of equity and pedagogical responsibility, this process becomes a powerful driver of inclusion and global justice. This study, therefore, is not limited to an academic contribution; rather, it reaffirms the viability of an ethical and social project: that of transforming public schools into spaces for educating global citizens capable of engaging in dialogue, collaborating, and taking action in an interconnected world, while promoting peace, sustainability, and human rights.

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