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## Investigate the internationalization from an intercultural perspective: the journey of an Argentine-Brazilian network

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**Abstract:** This article presents a schematic overview of three successive studies on internationalization practices in higher education from an intercultural perspective, which respectively addressed the micro (2016–2020), meso (2021–2024), and macro (2025–2028) levels of analysis. The overarching aim was to first examine a single experience involving a group of psychology course teams, then expand the inquiry to an institutional level by incorporating a set of proposals within one university, and ultimately reach a national level by identifying practices across different academic centers in Argentina. To carry out this research process—developed over the past decade—the collaborative work of an Argentine–Brazilian network of researchers, in which the authors of this article participate, proved to be of central value. The methodological designs of these three studies were based on different case-study approaches, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. The results highlight the relevance of interculturality as a dimension that cuts across the internationalization projects analyzed and underscore the need for further research that deepens the interconnection among the three levels of analysis addressed. This publication is offered as an instance of metacognitive reflection from the perspective of our own participation in this process, which may itself be considered a “case” of the internationalization of research.

**Keywords:** internationalization; higher education; interculturality; levels of analysis; collaborative network.

### 1 Introduction

This article aims to present the levels of analysis addressed over ten years in three successive research studies on the internationalization of higher education from an intercultural perspective. In this regard, Morosini (2021) states:

Internationalization consists of a set of actions aimed at providing opportunities and fostering the development of intercultural competencies and international qualifications, with the purpose of enabling individuals to face global challenges while embracing a collective entity that transcends individual differences (UNESCO, 2015). These considerations are framed within the challenges of the 21st century, in which higher education institutions must support the transformations of globalized knowledge by promoting the



capacity to educate intellectually and culturally competent individuals (Deardorff, 2004). In this regard, internationalization has become an increasingly strategic tool to achieve this goal (p. 65).

These studies were carried out through a collaborative network composed of colleagues from Argentine and Brazilian universities within the framework of the Calls for Action, Research, and Development (CAI+D). These calls promote scientific and technological activities conducted by research teams at the National University of the Littoral (UNL), located in Santa Fe, Argentina. Their purpose is to support research and development across different areas of knowledge. Accordingly, they aim to generate an impact on human resources, strengthen working groups, and foster collaboration among teams in order to expand knowledge and obtain results that are valid for scientific advancement and/or applicable to economic, social, and environmental contexts.

In the first study (2016–2020), entitled “Interculturality in the Internationalization of Higher Education: A Study of an Experience between Universities in Argentina and Brazil”, our unit of analysis was an Internationalization of the Curriculum (IntC) experience implemented with a group of psychology faculty members from universities in Argentina and Brazil. The central research question was how the intercultural dimension influences IntC processes at the higher education level. The methodology employed was a single-case study, which, as Stake (1999) suggests, aims to explore the particularity and complexity of that unique case. Its primary purpose was particularization rather than generalization, highlighting its singularity.

This study represented our initial approach to the topic, grounded in our own experience with an Internationalization of the Curriculum (IntC) practice. Its purpose was to identify theoretical categories that could help assess the outcomes of this IntC experience and inform future projects. The approach was guided by the notion of a transformative university, oriented toward social change, with a particular focus on interculturality within the Latin American context.

In the second study (2021–2023), entitled “Intercultural Experiences in Curriculum Internationalization at Home: Contributions to Integral Education in Higher Education”, we broadened our focus to nine cases, consisting of undergraduate curricular internationalization projects conducted at the National University of the Littoral (UNL). Consequently, the study shifted from a single-case approach to a comparative case-study design, aiming to analyze and contrast the similarities and

differences across multiple cases, in order to identify patterns and gain a deeper understanding of the complex phenomena involved. The research was driven by the need to distinguish the intercultural experiences enacted within these projects. Our goal was to develop recommendations for designing learning environments that foster such experiences in teaching, research, and community engagement, with the aim of promoting students' integral education.

In the third study, entitled “Good Practices in Internationalization and Interculturality: Case Studies in Argentine Universities (2016–2026)”, which began in 2024 and is currently ongoing, our central research question is: What role do intercultural criteria play in the definition and implementation of these practices? The methodology proposed is a study of exemplary cases—i.e., those recognized as good practices in various Argentine universities. The aim of this study is to explicitly foster the intercultural dimension within internationalization practices and to develop recommendations to enhance its integration in higher education.

The three studies share a common focus on examining intercultural dynamics within the processes of educational internationalization, aiming to strengthen their presence while employing a predominantly qualitative methodological approach. Rather than seeking to generalize results, our primary interest is in uncovering the general conditions that emerge from specific cases. In fact, this methodology allows the findings to be extended to other scenarios and contexts, meaning that other behaviors and situations can be anticipated (Beneitone, 2022).

This collective effort was consolidated through the establishment of a collaborative network called REPIE (Network for the Promotion of Interculturality in the Internationalization of Education). While it initially involved only two universities, it now includes faculty members from eight institutions: six in Brazil—Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG, Belo Horizonte), Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM, Diamantina), Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso (UFMT, Barra do Garças), Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF, Juiz de Fora), Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS, Rio Grande do Sul), and Universidade Estadual de Goiás (UEG, Goiás)—and two in Argentina—Universidad Nacional del Litoral (UNL, Santa Fe) and Universidad Católica de Salta (UCASAL, Buenos Aires campus). This network links curriculum internationalization with

teaching, research, and outreach activities, aiming to enhance the comprehensiveness of university education.

This paper constitutes a second essay on REPIE. In the first, we presented its history, theoretical foundations, and scope (Clérico; Leite; Guedes, 2021). In the present work, we focus on the progression of our investigations into intercultural dynamics within the field of educational internationalization. Our aim is to describe this experience by tracing how our analysis has evolved from the micro level to the meso level, and finally to the macro level—a sequence concisely summarized in Table I.

Table I – Levels of Analysis in REPIE Research Projects

Level of analysis	Period	Title of the project CAI+D	Overall objective	Method	Members of team
<b>Micro</b>	2016-2020	Interculture and the Internationalization of Higher Education: An Experience between Universities in Argentina and Brazil.	To inquire into how the intercultural dimension intervenes in the implementation process of a curricular internationalization experience carried out by members of the research team.	Single - case study.	UNL UADER UFMG UFVJM
<b>Meso</b>	2021-2024	Intercultural Experiences in Internationalization at Home: Contributions to Integral Education in Higher Education.	To examine, from an interdisciplinary perspective, the intercultural experiences related to at-home curricular internationalization projects (ICeC), as a contribution to integral education in higher education.	Multiple case studies: 9 projects by IntC/UNL with their international partners (see Table II).	UNL UADER UFMG UFVJM UFMT
<b>Macro</b>	2025-2028	Good Practices in Internationalization and Interculturality: Case Studies in Argentine Universities (2016–2026).	To analyze the articulation between good practices in the internationalization of higher education (IES) and interculturality at Argentine universities during the decade 2016–2026.	Multiple case studies: Practices by IES at different Argentine universities.	UNL UFVJM UFMT UEG UCASAL

Source: Prepared by the authors

As Barboza (2015) emphasizes, these three levels distinguish educational research and entail different theories and methodologies for inquiry: the micro level, situated in classroom contexts; the meso level, at the institutional and local-community level; and the macro level, within global society. In our study, the micro level refers to an internationalization project developed by multiple course teams within the same disciplinary area across two countries. The meso level pertains to the institutional scope of UNL, encompassing projects carried out by various course teams and academic units in collaboration with foreign universities. The macro level addresses practices at the national scale, examining internationalization in both public and private universities in Argentina. It is worth noting that all three levels involve the extension of university systems to the countries where these initiatives are implemented.

The importance of addressing the different levels involved in curriculum internationalization (IntC) is highlighted by Beneitone (2022), a leading scholar in this field in Argentina:

The factors at the disciplinary, institutional, local, national, regional, and global levels interact in various ways to facilitate or inhibit, guide, and shape approaches to curriculum internationalization, including how learning outcomes are defined, taught, and assessed (p. 167).

The article is organized into three sections, each presenting the foundations, key questions, and objectives that guided each study; the theoretical and methodological frameworks that informed them; and the main findings, along with the new questions that emerged and guided subsequent phases. This progression reflects the continuity over time, the relationships established, and our sustained interest in the topic, allowing us to expand the levels of analysis and deepen our understanding—as we aim to illustrate in this paper.

We present this process as evidence of how collaborative work strengthens the foundations of research in the Latin American region. Cooperation stands out as a key element in this context—a guiding thread that unites researchers, academics, and professionals within a dynamic space for the exchange of ideas and joint knowledge production, fostering the development of intercultural dynamics.

## **2 Interculturality in an IntC Project: Micro Level**

In this first study, we sought to identify the dynamic ways in which the intercultural dimension operates within higher education internationalization

processes. To this end, we examined the IntC project conducted between course teams in the field of Psychology, titled “Interculturality and Subjectivities of Argentine and Brazilian Adolescents and Young People: Case Studies as an Opportunity for Encounter with the Other.” This project was approved in the 2015 call of the Office of International Relations and the Academic Secretariat of the National University of the Littoral, and it has continued in various iterations since then. The proposal was based on an experience previously developed by the Educational Psychology course team at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, as documented by Vieira, Assis, and Campos (2013).

Five disciplines within the same knowledge area participated in the project: Psychology, Social Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Educational Psychology, and Adult Developmental Psychology. Together, we developed a curricular proposal in which students completed the same practical assignment. Case studies comparing adolescents from both countries were used to explore subjectivities from an intercultural perspective. Students prepared a report presenting both descriptive and analytical components, incorporating the main theoretical categories addressed by each discipline. Joint socialization activities were carried out between the universities, alongside academic workshops related to the topic. A shared virtual classroom was utilized, and joint classes were conducted between the two countries, either virtually or face-to-face during academic visits. Additionally, Brazilian professors participated as trainers in capacity-building sessions for volunteers and fellows involved in the extension projects carried out in Argentina. This proposal was accompanied by a gradual incorporation of virtual tools, which became the primary means of instruction during the Covid-19 pandemic (Clérico; Ramírez Barbieri; Gaspar, 2019). Notably, this working dynamic continues to be implemented in the IntC proposal within REPIE.

The need to systematize the learnings derived from this IntC experience, together with its integration into our teaching and extension projects, led us to initiate this first inquiry, entitled “Interculturality in the Internationalization of Higher Education: A Study of an Experience between Universities in Argentina and Brazil.” Once approved in the 2016 CAI+D call of UNL, the study was conducted with colleagues from the four universities participating at that time: the National University of the Littoral (UNL) and the National University of Entre Ríos (UADER) in Argentina, and the Federal

University of Minas Gerais (UFMG, Belo Horizonte) and the Federal University of the Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM, Diamantina) in Brazil.

The presence of professors from both countries allowed us to introduce the international dimension directly into the research process, giving the group a heterogeneous character. The review of the state of the art further enabled us to identify the growing demand for diverse research perspectives to contribute to the understanding of this topic through interdisciplinary work, fostering broader and deeper insights that incorporate the experiences of the participants.

The key questions that guided this study were whether the intercultural dimension is integrated into the purposes, functions, and content of this IntC proposal; to what extent it provides a setting that helps center educational processes on each student and on their relationships with both national and international peers; and how it contributes to students' understanding of others and of the world, enabling them to begin to understand themselves with responsibility, solidarity, and respect for diversity (Autor *et al.*, 2018).

We grounded our theoretical framework in Knight's (2010) notion of the internationalization of higher education, which conceives it as the process of integrating the international and intercultural dimension into an institution's teaching, research, and service. By intercultural dynamics, we refer to the exercise of understanding both sameness and difference within heterogeneous sociocultural spaces and in interaction with others. This dimension becomes essential as a relational approach to the "other" and to "ourselves," constituting a space of mutual enrichment where processes of knowledge construction and learning experiences are generated and strengthened through dialogical relations (Díaz Álvarez, 2007). In this sense, we understand it as a pedagogical key that jointly considers cultural diversity and human equality (Clérico; Leite; Gaspar, 2020). Consequently, we highlight certain differences from more widespread conceptions that place exclusive emphasis on diversity, as expressed in the following definition:

The notion of interculturality involves a profound recognition of the diversity inherent to the human species in terms of cultures or worldviews, which encompass not only different foods, dances, and forms of dress, but also distinct value systems, diverse bodies of knowledge, varied modes of knowledge production, and different ways of learning (Mato, 2009, p. 15).



To understand the identical human condition, we draw on the notion of elemental experience, which refers to the common core shared by all human beings—a core that is substantially the same in everyone, even though it is later defined, expressed, and enacted in very different, and sometimes seemingly opposite, ways. It encompasses the set of requirements and self-evident truths with which human beings are called to confront everything that exists (Giussani, 1998). This original structure of the human being can be recognized as the requirements for truth, beauty, goodness, justice, love, and happiness. These take shape in diverse ways throughout history in each individual and each community, giving rise to cultural diversity. They are shared by all human beings; however, this does not imply uniformity, but rather recognizing them in their originality (Clérico, 2019). Thus, otherness does not nullify these requirements; instead, it constitutes their richness. Considering cultural diversity and the identical human condition in an integrated manner as a pedagogical key for educating in intercultural contexts constitutes the hypothesis that guides our approach.

We adopted a qualitative approach, drawing on the academic traditions and theoretical training of the research team—phenomenology, ethnography, and case-based study. We relied on tools from evaluative research, which enabled us to assess the processes and outcomes of the IntC project through multiple methodological frameworks. These tools also provided rigor in the systematization of processes, enabling us to conduct a reliable study. Likewise, we used a single-case methodology, as it offered the possibility of a detailed, comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth examination of the topic under investigation. The data collection instruments consisted of evaluation questionnaires administered to participating students at each stage of work in our IntC project.

We disseminated this study in multiple instances, including articles published in scientific journals and conference presentations at academic and scientific events, many of which included the publication of an abstract or full paper in the proceedings. This body of work was later compiled in the book “Curriculum Internationalization and Interculturality: An Argentine–Brazilian Experience in Psychology Course Teams,” published by UNL Press in 2023.

As a result, we were able to recognize that the intercultural dimension permeates this experience from its very objectives, as it seeks to foster intercultural dialogue among teaching teams with a view to promoting students’ internationalization



(Clérico; Ramírez Barbieri; Gaspar, 2019). We value the use of comparative case studies to address adolescents' subjectivities from an intercultural perspective; this pedagogical device proved its potential to facilitate meaningful encounters by providing tools that help students navigate changing environments. Furthermore, we identified how access to knowledge about other cultures and foreign languages promotes the development of intercultural competences within the proposed teaching–learning processes (Clérico, 2020).

Another conclusion we reached was that, by centering the discussion on a common axis—adolescence, in this case—we, as instructors, committed ourselves to strengthening the intercultural perspective, striving to spark students' interest in the IntC experience, including their motivation to learn about a culture different from their own (Leite *et al.*, 2017). Interculturality also comes into play in the mode of collaboration between course teams, in the connections established across different spaces, timeframes, and cultures—differences that become opportunities rather than obstacles (Clérico *et al.*, 2017). This approach cuts across our teaching, research, and extension projects, fostering enriching encounters among students, faculty, and non-teaching university staff from both countries (Clérico *et al.*, 2018).

The analysis of the responses to the evaluation questionnaires administered to students during the various joint activities over those five years made it possible to improve the didactic device proposed each semester within the framework of this IntC project. Indeed, since the study identified a demand for greater intercultural interaction between students from both countries, the team decided to move from offering a single shared instance in 2016 to implementing, in both semesters of 2020, a pilot experience consisting of the creation of mixed groups for the completion of practical assignments. Its evaluation allowed us to compare the results of these groups with those composed of students from a single country. We identified the opportunities that arise from integrating Argentine and Brazilian students into the same working group. We therefore concluded that, in order to foster intercultural encounters within the framework of IntC, it is necessary to implement didactic devices specifically designed for that purpose.

We identified the case study as a valuable tool for strengthening the teaching of psychology (Clérico; Ingüi, 2020), and we began to question how it could function in the teaching of other disciplines and fields of knowledge. This gave rise to new questions that opened the way for the continuation of our inquiry in the following study.

Among them, we highlight the following: How do we promote the integration of the three university functions in our daily work as faculty members? In what ways do we incorporate dialogue with other social actors into our academic practice? How do we render thinkable what takes place in the territory through new forms of intervention, teaching, and research? How do we foster processes that enrich intercultural encounters? (Clérico *et al.*, 2021). Which learning environments and contexts are most appropriate for enhancing the process of curricular internationalization within our course teams? How can new technologies contribute to the creation of effective learning environments that, at the same time, preserve and acknowledge the human dimension? (Ramírez Barbieri; Gaspar, 2019).

In this way, by embracing the challenges of proposing curricular exchanges between universities, we recognize that it is possible to promote genuine teaching and learning spaces when a concrete relationship and a revitalized interest exist among the individuals involved. This enables the expansion of horizons and makes the intercultural encounter within our universities truly effective (Leite *et al.*, 2017). At the next level, we observe how the intercultural dimension becomes meaningful through different IntC initiatives.

### **3 Intercultural IntC Experiences at a University: Meso Level**

This second study, conducted between 2021 and 2024, analyzed the intercultural experiences of nine IntC projects approved in the 2018 call for the internationalization of curricular spaces in undergraduate programs at UNL. Its main objectives were to identify the key accomplishments and challenges of these initiatives, as well as the factors that facilitate or hinder the development of such experiences. Among these factors are the role of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), faculty development, pedagogical mediation, and the type of academic content addressed. Overall, the purpose was to contribute to the strengthening of comprehensive education in higher education.

For this purpose, we adopted and updated our reference framework from the 2016 CAI+D project in relation to the main theoretical categories. We incorporated the category of intercultural encounter in order to show “how a person responds when confronted with the experience of a specific form of intercultural encounter—namely, being a foreigner in an unfamiliar context” (Leite, 2016, p. 117).

Moreover, we revisited the concern of deepening the foundations of a pedagogy for the internationalization of higher education. As Morosini, Woicolesco, and Nez (2021) suggest, “the development of research aimed at analyzing which pedagogical practices provide students with an international and intercultural education will undoubtedly contribute to rethinking the role of faculty in the internationalization of higher education” (p. 143). With this study, we seek to offer contributions in that direction.

From a methodological standpoint, the cooperative research perspective was selected; consequently, members from each of the selected projects were invited to participate. In this way, one of the distinctive aspects of this study was the composition of the research team, which included specialists from diverse disciplines and nationalities, thus acquiring an interdisciplinary and international character. Having been approved in the CAI+D 2020 call, the study was coordinated at UNL, with the cooperation of the universities involved. Accordingly, researchers from universities in Argentina (UNL, UADER) and Brazil (UFVJM, UFMT, UFMG) participated, along with professors and undergraduate and postgraduate students from eight course teams belonging to six academic units at UNL and five academic units at the Brazilian institutions. The characteristics of the selected cases are presented in the following table.

Table II – IntC projects at UNL selected as cases for CAI+D 2020.

	Curricular International Projects	UNL Academic Unit	Degree programs involved	Participant Courses	Foreign universities and others	Partner country
1	Rhythms and Harmonies of Latin American Popular Music	Higher Institute of Music (FHUC)	Bachelor's degree in Popular Music (UNL)	Ensemble I (UNL)	University of Campinas-UNICAMP	Brazil
2	Strengthening of the Internationalization in Curricular Spaces in Higher Education through Technology	Faculty of Veterinary Sciences (FCV)	Veterinary Medicine	Computer Science (UNL)	University of the Republic (Uruguay) (UDELAR)	Uruguay
				Education Department (UDELAR)		
				Computer Science (UL)	University of León (UL)	Spain

3	UNESCO Itinerant Chair "Edgar Morin" (CIUEM)	Faculty of Agricultural Sciences (FCA)	Agricultural Engineering	Human Development I and II (UNL)	Itinerant Chair	Mexico and others
4	The cost of the labor factor: a comparative view between Mexico and Argentina	Faculty of Economic Sciences (FCE)	Certified Public Accountant (UNL) Bachelor's degree in Public Accounting (UG)	Cost Accounting (UNL) Comprehensive Analysis of cost elements (UG)	University of Guadalajara (UG)	Mexico
5	Studies on equity, social, and management accounting in social-economy organizations in Brazil and Argentina	Faculty of Economic Sciences (FCE)	Certified Public Accountant	Financial statements I and II Costs Accounting (UNL)	Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM) Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG)	Brazil
6	Modeling, Simulation, and Remote Control	Faculty of Chemical Engineering	Chemical Engineering/ Food Engineering	Instrumentation and Process Control (UNL)	Federal University of Santa Catarina	Brazil
	of Industrial Processes	(FIQ)			(UFSC)	
7	Formation of a network for the internationalization of the Digital Image Processing curriculum	Faculty of Water Sciences and Engineering (FICH)	Computer Engineering	Digital Image Processing (UNL)	Óbuda University, Budapest and Costa Rica Institute of Technology	Hungary and Costa Rica
8	Integrating Nutritional and Biochemical-Metabolic Aspects into University Curricula: Advancing International and Multicultural Competencies.	Faculty of Biochemistry and Biological Sciences (FBCB)	Bachelor's Degree in Nutrition Nutrition (UNL) and Dietetics (UC)	Biological Chemistry(UNL) Nutritional Biochemistry (UC) and Foundations of Nutrition (UC)	University of Chile (UC)	Chile
9	Intercultural Encounter in Teaching, Research, and Extension for the Curricular Internationalization of Psychology and Psychoanalysis Course Teams	Faculty of Biochemistry and Biological Sciences (FBCB) Faculty of Humanities and Sciences (FHUC)	Bachelor's Degree in Occupational Therapy (UNL) Teaching Degrees and Bachelor's Degrees (UNL) Pedagogy and Bachelor's Degree Programs (UFMG) Bachelor's Degree	Social Psychology (UNL) Psychology (UNL) Educational Psychological (UFMG)	Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) Federal	Brazil

			in Geography / History / Education / Literature (UFVJM)	Adult Developmental Psychology (UFVJM)	University of dos Vales de Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM)	
			Medicine (UFVJM)	Personal Development III (UFVJM)		
			Bachelor's Degree Programs (UFMT)	Educational Psychology (UFMT)	Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT)	
			Technical Degree in Therapeutic Support and Psychogerontology	Development Theories II: Adulthood and Old Age (UADER)	Autonomous University of Entre Rios (UADER)	

Source: Prepared by the authors based on data from the conducted research.

Just as shown in Table II, the nine projects studied span knowledge areas as diverse as the human, social, biological, exact, agricultural, technological, and engineering sciences, allowing for a broad analysis of curricular internationalization. A total of fourteen universities were involved, twelve of which were foreign institutions. Twelve Latin American universities and two European ones participated. The countries represented, in addition to Argentina, include Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Spain, Hungary, Mexico, and Uruguay.

This longitudinal study adopted a phenomenological perspective to understand the meanings and interpretations that the actors involved attributed to the intercultural experiences developed within the framework of IntC. The methodology employed combined a quantitative–qualitative triangulation, using a variety of data-collection techniques—such as case conferences, interviews, surveys, and observations—in pursuit of a rigorous and holistic approach to the phenomenon under study. Two sources of information were used: students and faculty members. Similarly, to the previous CAI+D project, we disseminated the results in multiple instances, including articles published in scientific journals and the presentation of conference papers at academic events, which are currently being compiled into a book.

In reference to the factors that foster or hinder the development of intercultural experiences, the findings reveal key aspects related to the following dimensions: institutional culture, teaching proposals, and the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Institutional culture is reflected in the crucial role played by institutional policies related to IntC, as evidenced by the type of support provided to the initiatives undertaken by course teams and the degree of academic

recognition offered to participants. However, one of the main challenges identified within this dimension was the coordination of activities between institutions that operate under highly heterogeneous organizational models. Differences in academic calendars are a clear example, as they vary significantly from one university to another. Therefore, this situation requires flexibility and creativity when planning joint activities in order to reach consensus and achieve the intended objectives.

The diversity of profiles among managers, faculty members, and students represented another intervening factor. A wide range of motivations and previous experiences, as well as varied knowledge and pedagogical approaches, were observed—elements that influence how curricular internationalization is carried out and the results achieved. In this regard, the inclusion of internationalization in teacher education, as well as the promotion of specialization in this field, emerges as a key component for ensuring the quality of intercultural experiences. Thus, one of the main findings of this second study is the relevance acquired by the institutional level in IntC actions, considering in particular the influence of institutional cultures on the heterogeneity of formats that internationalization initiatives take within the same university.

A variety of pedagogical styles can be observed in the implemented proposals, revealing how this diversity influences students' intercultural learning experiences. The teaching approaches show the use of diverse strategies, including the integration of technologies, the use of physical and virtual spaces, the exchange of materials, and collaboration in academic activities.

The language differences between the countries are recognized as a factor that may affect communication and the development of activities. Various strategies were employed to address this issue, such as simultaneous interpretation and the use of online translators. This, in turn, is valued as an opportunity to promote language learning, showing that linguistic diversity can strengthen intercultural teaching and learning processes.

The use of ICT emerged as a cross-cutting component in some of the IntC projects. Evidence shows that the development of virtual collaborative spaces facilitates interaction among participants from different institutions, including the use of videoconferencing platforms, discussion forums, and other digital tools. They also make use of the virtual learning environments of the universities involved.

Nonetheless, challenges were also identified in relation to the conditions of the technological systems, which raises the need to ensure equitable access to resources for all participants. Consequently, we conclude that combining an innovative pedagogical approach with appropriate technological tools strengthens student learning in response to current demands, enables the crossing of borders, and fosters cultural diversity (Gramaglia, 2025).

We confirmed that the incorporation of the intercultural dimension into the IntC didactic proposals constitutes one of the key factors that promote their continuity. We verified that not all the analyzed projects explicitly include this dimension among their objectives and strategies (Bayonés; Clérico, 2024). Although the conceptual definition of internationalization entails an intercultural dimension, the inquiry conducted shows that it is not necessarily present when planning and implementing internationalization processes. Nevertheless, even in cases where it was not explicitly planned, when evaluating the experiences, the intercultural dimension was appreciated as an achievement, becoming one of the main unexpected outcomes (Bayonés *et al.*, 2024). The identification of an invisible interculturality reveals that those proposals that strategically plan for the intercultural component attain greater continuity, contributing to the achievement of their objectives (Guedes *et al.*, 2023). These findings, therefore, suggest the need to systematically integrate the intercultural dimension into objectives and didactic strategies to promote internationalization in a structured and deliberate manner.

#### **4 Good IntC Practices of Argentine Universities: Macro Level**

Having described the first two studies, in this section we present the proposal titled “Good Practices in Internationalization and Interculturality: Case Studies in Argentine Universities (2016-2026)”, whose overall objective is to analyze the connections between good practices in the internationalization of higher education and interculturality. Specifically, we aim to identify criteria that define good practices, characterize them, and examine their relationship with interculturality based on the experiences of the actors involved, taking into account their affiliation with different Argentine universities. Thus, unlike the previous studies, this research extends to a macro level.



This project, approved in the CAI+D 2024 call at UNL, emerged from the consideration of two matters. First, it stemmed from the recognition of a series of actions at different Argentine universities that were valued as good practices in internationalization by national and international higher education organizations — International Cooperation Network of National Universities (RedCIUN), National Interuniversity Council (CIN), and Private Universities Rectors Council (CRUP) — following UNESCO guidelines and those of the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science, and Culture (OEI). Second, during the CAI+D 2020 call, it was found that only some of UNL's internationalization proposals had achieved continuity and had successfully overcome the situations experienced during the pandemic; these were precisely the ones selected by the aforementioned organizations. In this context, we highlight the importance of making visible the connections between internationalization actions and the intercultural dimension.

The researchers of CAI+D 2024 form a binational team and belong to nine academic units, which include five institutions: Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT), Federal University of the Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM), and State University of Goiás (UEG) from Brazil, and Catholic University of Salta (UCASAL) and UNL from Argentina. Through this expansion, two new universities were incorporated into our research, allowing us to broaden the scope of inquiry and include new dimensions in the topics addressed. This is the case, for example, of the research on interculturality based on the presence of international students in Argentine universities, currently being conducted by one of the team members.

The new proposal consists of recognizing the criteria used to define good practices (Gacel-Ávila, 2019; CIN, 2022) and analyzing the role assigned to intercultural processes within them. We justify this intention based on the observation that this linkage does not necessarily become explicitly evident in the different internationalization proposals, despite the relevance that the intercultural dimension has gained in recent years, becoming a topic included in theoretical debates regarding the internationalization of education (Leite *et al.*, 2017; Clérico *et al.*, 2018; Clérico *et al.*, 2023).

We adopted the concept of comprehensive internationalization as our reference framework. This perspective understands that the planning and management of internationalization within universities and educational institutions includes the set of

actions, principles, and objectives that impact the entirety of campus life. Consequently, internationalization strategies must be transversal across educational, curricular, and academic processes (Arango; Acuña, 2018). We emphasize that internationalization cannot be addressed without attending to the intercultural dimension it entails, considering that these are two different and singular—but complementary—concepts. In addition, this framework is strengthened by adopting the solidarity-based and endogenous perspective proposed by Oregioni and Tabora (2018), which highlights the importance of carrying out horizontal cooperation activities between institutions and sectors.

The notion of good practices is addressed by different authors. Beltrán and Reyes (2020) state that “good educational practices are promoted to refer to a set of actions or principles that gain recognition for the positive results that can be obtained from their replication” (p. 1). For their part, Maglia Canzani and Sotelo (2019) adopt, as criteria to identify good practices, that they be pertinent to the expected aims; meet the needs of the organization; have an impact; show results; and be sustainable. Sustainability and continuous implementation—rather than isolated experiences—enable the creation of cooperative work teams and networks that strengthen practices associated with internationalization, such as the mobility of professors, researchers, students, and administrators; international projects; research and development collaboration, among others. The result of these processes is reflected in their positive impact on the training of those involved in such practices. UNESCO (2003) understands good practices as those that meet the criteria of innovation, effectiveness, and sustainability, and that, in addition, can be replicated. It highlights the importance of ensuring that such practices are properly systematized and detailed so that they can be used and replicated in different contexts. This, in turn, leads to conceiving them as practices that are institutionally integrated so that they remain sustainable over time through their continuous implementation.

Based on this trajectory, we arrived at the need for these practices to be delimited not only by their effectiveness, efficiency, innovation, and sustainability, as proposed by these authors, but also by their intercultural relevance.

The increasing dissemination of this notion in the field of the internationalization of education is evidenced in the numerous events and calls carried out by university institutions and national and international organizations that identify and present them

in all their breadth. Thus, this shows the need to have models and guidelines to follow so that actions may be effective, efficient, and culturally meaningful.

To reach the intended objectives, we opted for a qualitative–quantitative methodological design based on case studies of experiences identified as good practices in the internationalization of Argentine universities during the period 2016–2026. The analysis will include official documents and publications related to internationalization activities. In addition to documentary sources, key participants (students, faculty members, administrative staff, and managers) will be consulted through individual and group interviews, discussion groups, experience narratives, online questionnaires (Google Forms®) with closed and open questions, seminars for the socialization of experiences, as well as class observations and other academic activities.

This longitudinal study adopts 2016 as its initial period, when UNL carried out the first call for the internationalization of curricular spaces in undergraduate programs. Since then, various internationalization initiatives have been developed, driven by educational policies from universities in the region, which reflect the growing interest in this topic.

In this new instance, we expect to produce knowledge that allows us to understand and reflect on the meaning of good practices in Argentine universities. We aim to incorporate questions regarding how these practices are linked to the intercultural dimension and to what extent they contribute to the internationalization processes in higher education in a comprehensive sense, and in a manner that is respectful of the human condition, aligned with the perspective we adopt on this topic (Clérico *et al.*, 2023). Although this theoretical perspective constitutes a starting point for undertaking this new research challenge, we remain open to the possibility of expanding and deepening our conceptual framework by incorporating additional theoretical contributions and engaging in new discussions.

Among the goals and indicators we propose are the creation of a digital repository of good practices in internationalization; the development and validation of specific data-collection instruments for the topic; the expansion of REPIE with new partners to generate linkages with other national and international networks focused on this topic; the explicit promotion of interculturality in internationalization

practices; and the formulation of recommendations to strengthen its presence in Higher Education.

## 5 Final Considerations

In this narrative, we have been building an integrative framework that shows the articulations among the three successive research projects carried out by REPIE, based on presenting their different levels of analysis. Our purpose has been to reflect on the results achieved over a decade of work and to deepen the metacognition of the learnings generated. Each project established different objectives, yet all of them were marked by the same concern:

- **Micro Level (2016–2020):** To inquire into how the intercultural dimension intervenes in the implementation of a curricular internationalization experience between universities from Argentina and Brazil.
- **Meso Level (2021–2024):** To examine the intercultural experiences in at-home curricular internationalization projects for integral education in higher education.
- **Macro Level (2025–2028):** To analyze the articulations between good practices in the internationalization of higher education and interculturality in Argentine universities.

This academic activity has been strengthened throughout the process, articulated with the continuity of the internationalization proposals, as well as with the possibility of inquiring into a topic that remains relatively unexplored. In this sense, continuity—both in the internationalization of the curriculum and in its investigation—has become one of our main allies. Moreover, as we delve into each phase of the work, new questions emerge. Thus, a central characteristic that distinguishes the field of scientific knowledge construction becomes evident: problems are never exhausted; in fact, with each achievement, the horizon that opens before us expands even further.

These findings allow us to confirm that IntC in the higher education context can foster intercultural dialogue, enriching the integral development of students—as well as professors, non-teaching staff, and managers. It enables the construction of bridges between universities in different countries, transcending spatial boundaries and projecting our classrooms into the world. Although internationalization practices do not always explicitly incorporate the intercultural dimension among their objectives, the

results obtained show that they offer favorable spaces to promote it. For this reason, we highlight the need to integrate it intentionally into these initiatives so that it ceases to operate as an “invisible dimension.” Higher education policies can be strengthened through IntC practices that value cultural diversity and the human condition, promoting recognition of the other, cooperation, empathy, and dialogue.

Returning to our intention of carrying out a metacognitive reflection on our work, we have identified collaborative work as a key element for facilitating and enriching our actions. The possibility of sharing tasks—such as planning, systematizing, and collectively evaluating—contributes to maintaining continuity and achieving the intended objectives, while enriching the way we inhabit our universities. This construction is consolidated through careful attention to interpersonal relationships, and it enables creative responses to the challenges involved in coordinating a research team composed of members from countries with different academic traditions and languages.

Embracing the challenge of conducting research on the course-based projects in which we participate, the institutions that involve us, and the national and international spheres to which we belong—while also opening ourselves to examining other projects and institutions—has allowed us to confirm the interconnection between the local, regional, national, and international dimensions within IntC processes. This perspective leads us to understand that, rather than distinguishing between levels, it is necessary to study them in their mutual articulation. At the same time, it becomes evident that this issue calls for increasingly deeper inquiry.

In summary, as the main contributions to this field of Higher Education, we highlight the importance of addressing interculturality as a key dimension of IntC and of enriching the perspectives from which it is studied, incorporating the appreciation of cultural diversity and the human condition in internationalization experiences. At a methodological level, the value of collaborative work stands out for the adoption of innovative pedagogical approaches in IntC, as well as the potential of case studies for exploring this topic.

As possible future developments, the findings point to the need to continue addressing the interconnections among the disciplinary, institutional, local, regional, national, and international dimensions involved in IntC processes. This entails expanding the conceptual boundaries associated with the micro, meso, and macro

levels of analysis, given that all of them are traversed by the international dimension. Within this framework, it becomes relevant to deepen the analysis of the role played by each actor, including social organizations and the local communities in which they are embedded.

We conclude by highlighting that fostering intercultural dynamics through IntC contributes to building the university as a space for academic formation and the production of high-quality knowledge. These dynamics not only transform the teaching and learning process, but also help shape a more inclusive and socially responsible university.

When looking back on our journey, we are struck by the bonds that have emerged—connections that have expanded through new encounters and friendships, and that have been strengthened by sharing the same endeavor: valuing education as a transformative practice. Finally, we wish to express our interest in disseminating our work through this article and to invite professors and researchers to broaden the study of this topic through new paths of inquiry.

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