




**ANALYSIS OF THE TRAINING OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS
PROFESSIONALS IN THE SOUTHEAST REGION OF BRAZIL: CHALLENGES
AND PERSPECTIVES FOR A NEW DIGITAL ERA**

**ANÁLISE DA FORMAÇÃO DO PROFISSIONAL DE RELAÇÕES
INTERNACIONAIS NA REGIÃO SUDESTE DO BRASIL: DESAFIOS E
PERSPECTIVAS PARA UMA NOVA ERA DIGITAL**

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PERSPECTIVAS PARA UNA NUEVA ERA DIGITAL**

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the curricula of International Relations programs in the Southeast region of Brazil. Documentary research identifies a common theoretical framework among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), grounded in classic disciplines such as International Relations Theory, International Law, and Economics, but reveals distinct pedagogical approaches and levels of incorporation of contemporary practices. The Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) and the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) stand out for their practical emphasis, inclusion of digital skills, international negotiation, and innovation, demonstrating greater alignment with the global market. On the other hand, the University of São Paulo (USP) and the São Paulo State University (UNESP) prioritize theoretical and academic training, with less integration of applied and technological content. In-depth interviews with professionals and faculty in the field indicate that syllabus development is influenced by institutional profile, regional context, and the degree of thematic updating. Interdisciplinarity is recognized, but methodological transversality is still lacking. As final considerations, we conclude that there is an urgent need for a curriculum review to address topics such as ESG, digital literacy, and technological diplomacy. We emphasize the importance of more hybrid pedagogical projects, with interdisciplinarity and methodological transversality, capable of operating in complex international and digital environments.

Keywords: International Relations. Professional Training. Curricular Innovation. Interdisciplinarity. Southeast Region.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa os currículos dos cursos de Relações Internacionais da região Sudeste do Brasil. A pesquisa documental identifica a base teórica comum entre as Instituições de Ensino Superior (IES), fundamentada em disciplinas clássicas como Teoria das Relações Internacionais, Direito Internacional e Economia, mas revela distintas abordagens pedagógicas e níveis de inserção de práticas contemporâneas. Universidade Federal de Uberlândia - UFU e Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais - UFMG se destacam pela ênfase

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prática, inclusão de competências digitais, negociação internacional e inovação, demonstrando maior alinhamento com o mercado global. Por outro lado, a Universidade de São Paulo - USP e a Universidade Estadual Paulista - UNESP priorizam a formação teórica e acadêmica, com menor integração de conteúdos aplicados e tecnológicos. Entrevistas de profundidade com profissionais e docentes da área apontam que a elaboração das ementas é influenciada pelo perfil institucional, contexto regional e grau de atualização temática. A interdisciplinaridade é reconhecida, mas ainda carece de transversalidade metodológica. A título de considerações finais, conclui-se que há uma necessidade urgente de revisão curricular para contemplar temas como ESG, letramento digital e diplomacia tecnológica. Reforça-se a importância de projetos pedagógicos mais híbridos, com interdisciplinaridade e transversalidade metodológica, capazes de atuar em ambientes internacionais complexos e digitais.

Palavras-chave: Relações Internacionais. Formação Profissional. Inovação Curricular. Interdisciplinaridade. Região Sudeste.

RESUMEN

Este artículo analiza los planes de estudio de los programas de Relaciones Internacionales en la región Sudeste de Brasil. Una investigación documental identifica un marco teórico común entre las Instituciones de Educación Superior (IES), basado en disciplinas clásicas como la Teoría de las Relaciones Internacionales, el Derecho Internacional y la Economía, pero revela distintos enfoques pedagógicos y niveles de incorporación de prácticas contemporáneas. La Universidad Federal de Uberlândia (UFU) y la Universidad Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) se destacan por su énfasis práctico, la inclusión de habilidades digitales, la negociación internacional y la innovación, demostrando una mayor alineación con el mercado global. Por otro lado, la Universidad de São Paulo (USP) y la Universidad Estadual Paulista (UNESP) priorizan la formación teórica y académica, con una menor integración de contenidos aplicados y tecnológicos. Entrevistas en profundidad con profesionales y docentes del área indican que el desarrollo curricular está influenciado por el perfil institucional, el contexto regional y el grado de actualización temática. Se reconoce la interdisciplinariedad, pero aún falta transversalidad metodológica. Como consideraciones finales, concluimos que existe una necesidad urgente de una revisión curricular para abordar temas como ESG, alfabetización digital y diplomacia tecnológica. Destacamos la importancia de proyectos pedagógicos más híbridos, con interdisciplinariedad y transversalidad metodológica, capaces de operar en entornos internacionales y digitales complejos.

Palabras clave: Relaciones Internacionales. Formación Profesional. Innovación Curricular. Interdisciplinariedad. Región Sudeste.



1 INTRODUCTION

The training of International Relations (IR) professionals in Brazil has undergone significant transformations in recent decades, reflecting changes in the global situation and in the demands of the labor market. Since the creation of the first undergraduate course in the area, in 1974, at the University of Brasília (UnB) (Ribeiro, Kato and Reiner, 2013), academic programs have adopted a multidisciplinary approach, incorporating disciplines of international politics, economics, law and management. However, the growing complexity of international relations and the diversification of professional opportunities require a more precise alignment between academic training and the skills demanded by different sectors, including diplomatic, corporate, and the third sector.

The research problem is to investigate whether Brazilian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), especially in the Southeast region, are structuring the training in International Relations to meet the demands of the labor market? The main objective of this study is to analyze the academic training through the curricula of the bachelor's degree courses in International Relations and its compatibility with the requirements of the internationalized labor market.

The academic training of the International Relations professional has become a topic of growing interest in the face of the political, economic and technological transformations of the globalized world, including the presence of artificial intelligence and other disruptive technologies in diplomacy and international relations, emphasizing the need to develop negotiation skills adapted to the digital environment (SELA, 2023), in addition to desirable skills and competencies that need to be included in the national curriculum guidelines for International Relations courses, highlighted by Furtado (2019).

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT

The growing interdependence between States, the dynamism of the international scenario and the complexity of global challenges impose increasing demands on professionals working in this field. In this context, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play an important role in the training of specialists able to understand and intervene in international dynamics, covering areas such as diplomacy, foreign trade, international security and human rights. As Gereffi, Humphrey and Sturgeon (2005) point out, in their analysis of global value chains, the structuring and governance of these chains directly influence the competencies



demanding of professionals who work in international markets, highlighting the need for training aligned with the demands of the globalized environment.

In view of this, teaching and research in the theory of International Relations in Brazil present specific challenges and trends, where the absence of specific national curriculum guidelines for the International Relations course and the diversity of approaches adopted by different institutions result in a heterogeneous education, which can have an unfavorable impact on the employability of graduates and their ability to act effectively in a competitive environment.

The field of activity of the International Relations professional is vast and multidisciplinary, covering public and private sectors, international organizations, consultancies and academic research. The training of this professional allows the application of their knowledge in different contexts, in which the understanding of global dynamics, analysis of political and economic scenarios and negotiation skills are fundamental. The following are the main areas of activity of the internationalist.

In the private sector, multinationals demand specialists in institutional and government relations, business diplomacy and internationalization strategies, where they develop market analysis, trade promotion and advise international negotiations, especially in unstable contexts. They manage operational and institutional risks in adverse markets, ensuring the sustainability of global operations. They work in the formulation of solutions to institutional crises and corporate image, parliamentary advice and representation of private interests in the public sector.

In international organizations, there are opportunities in project management and global policy evaluation. Institutions such as the United Nations (UN), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and World Health Organization (WHO) hire experts to monitor data, reports and humanitarian actions. Economic organizations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) and the BRICS Bank demand market analysis, project financing and trade regulation. The WTO also offers vacancies in dispute resolution and international trade policymaking.

In the area of marketing and communication, internationalists work in the coverage of global events in newspapers, blogs and TV, as well as advising governments, organizations and companies. Image management and media training for brands, governments and

individuals requires skills in public diplomacy and reputational crisis management. In the financial sector, they are responsible for risk analysis in banks, stock exchanges and investment funds. They also manage institutional relations with international stakeholders and communicate with foreign clients and shareholders.

An academic career and research constitute one of the most traditional paths for internationalists, whether in public institutions, such as the Institute of Applied Economic Research (IPEA), the Central Bank and the BNDES, or in universities and research centers in Brazil and abroad. In this area, the professional can dedicate himself to studies on international politics, foreign trade, global security, human rights, among other fundamental topics for understanding the dynamics of the international system.

From this panorama, it is evident that training in International Relations requires a combination of technical, analytical, and interpersonal skills from the professional to deal with the challenges imposed by the contemporary global scenario, aspects addressed by Maia (2020).

The literature on training in International Relations in Brazil emphasizes the interdisciplinary character of the courses, which integrate areas of knowledge such as political science, economics, law and administration. Classic studies, such as that of Caligiuri et al. (1998), and more recent research, such as those of Aguzzoli et al. (2024), analyze determinant factors for professional success in international contexts, highlighting, for example, the impact of family adaptation on the international mobility of professionals. In addition, contemporary approaches seek to offer an integrated perspective of international phenomena, enabling students to work in different contexts and professional sectors.

Academic training is not always aligned with the demands of the job market. There is a discrepancy between the skills taught in undergraduate courses and those demanded by employers, especially in the private sector. While universities emphasize theory and research, the market values practical skills such as negotiation, project management, and risk analysis.

Another aspect addressed in the literature is the importance of soft skills for IR professionals. Studies indicate that interpersonal skills, such as effective communication, critical thinking and adaptability, are essential for professional recognition in the area, as Costa (2014) addresses, quantitatively, in his career success perception scale – EPSC. However, many courses still prioritize the development of theoretical knowledge to the detriment of these transversal skills.

IR training in Brazil differs from that offered in other countries, where there is a greater emphasis on practical experience through internships and simulation programs. These differences raise questions about the competitiveness of Brazilian graduates in the global market.

Therefore, there is a need for a more in-depth debate on the adequacy of International Relations (IR) curricula to contemporary demands, as well as on the internationalization of teaching, whose approach varies significantly between different national, institutional and disciplinary contexts. This process has the potential to drive disruptive innovations in the internationalization of higher education, as highlighted by Whitsed (2024). Based on these reflections, the present study seeks to contribute to the understanding of this relationship and propose strategies to improve the training of International Relations professionals in Brazil.

2.2 REPRESENTATIVENESS OF THE SOUTHEAST REGION IN THE CONTEXT OF BRAZILIAN FOREIGN TRADE.

Analyzing the Brazilian Foreign Trade Flow in 2024, its composition is represented by the sum of exports and imports, reaching US\$ 599.43 billion. Exports totaled US\$ 337.03 billion, while imports totaled US\$ 262.4 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of US\$ 74.5 billion, according to the Ministry of Development, Industry, Trade and Services (2024). The performance of exports was influenced by the drop in the prices and volumes of commodities such as soybeans, corn and iron ore. On the other hand, imports increased due to the economic recovery and increased demand for capital goods (REUTERS, 2024).

The Southeast region plays an important role in Brazil's foreign trade flow, concentrating a significant portion of the country's exports and imports. In 2024, the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, and Espírito Santo contributed substantially to these trade flows.

São Paulo led exports, with emphasis on manufactured products such as motor vehicles, machinery and equipment. Minas Gerais contributed with exports of ores, especially iron and nickel. Rio de Janeiro had an increase in crude oil exports, while Espírito Santo stood out in pulp and paper exports.

In imports, São Paulo again led, receiving capital goods, chemicals and electronics. Minas Gerais mainly imported chemicals and industrial equipment. Rio de Janeiro focused on the import of fuels and petrochemical products, while Espírito Santo mainly imported machinery and equipment for the pulp industry, according to the MDIC (undated).

3 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The training of International Relations professionals is a topic of great relevance in the current context, especially in an increasingly interconnected world. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) play a fundamental role in the preparation of these professionals, but it is necessary to evaluate whether the curriculum and complementary activities offered are adequate to the demands of the Brazilian labor market.

The guiding question of this study refers to "How are Brazilian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) structuring training in International Relations to meet the demands of the labor market?". The main objective is to analyze the academic training in International Relations offered by HEIs in the Southeast region and its compatibility with the needs of the Brazilian labor market. As secondary objectives, we have the identification of the main contents addressed in the curricula of the HEIs in the Southeast region, evaluate the effectiveness of the active methodologies used in teaching, examine the relevance of complementary activities for student training and propose recommendations for interventions that can align academic training with the demands of the Brazilian labor market and the challenges of the new digital reality, involving disruptive technologies.

This study uses a comparative qualitative method with the support of NLP (Natural Language Processing) tools for semantic analysis of the syllabuses available from four courses: USP, UNESP, UFU and UFMG. The analytical dimensions considered were: (1) competency profile; (2) regional vs global approach; (3) theoretical vs. practical emphasis; (4) insertion of technology and innovation; and (5) sustainability and ESG. The analysis involved thematic classification, qualitative scoring (1 to 5) and generation of comparative visualizations and the analysis of metadata by experts. To compare and analyze the syllabuses of International Relations courses from different higher education institutions, especially with a focus on identifying patterns, gaps, redundancies and alignment with market competencies, it is proposed to use a combination of NLP tools with specific functionalities for textual analysis that enhance Ripf's Law (PINTO et al 2015) and methodologically aligned with the approach of Brinkmann and Kvale (2015).

As for the universe and sample considered, in Brazil, according to the Ministry of Education and Culture (undated), there are 168 undergraduate courses in International Relations, distributed between face-to-face and distance courses. Of these, 141 are face-to-face, corresponding to approximately 84% of the total, and 27 are offered in the distance modality, representing 16% of the available courses.

With regard to areas of knowledge, the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) recommend an interdisciplinary approach, covering essential fields such as Social Sciences and Humanities — with emphasis on Theory of International Relations, International Politics, International Law, International Economics, History of International Relations and Geopolitics —, as well as content in Linguistics and Languages, Technologies and Data Analysis, and Culture and Society. This structure aims to ensure a broad and critical education, capable of contextualizing international dynamics from different perspectives.

The guidelines also highlight the importance of adopting active teaching methodologies, which favor meaningful learning and the development of applied skills. Among the recommended methods are case studies, negotiation simulations, interdisciplinary projects, problem-based learning (PBL), dynamic lectures and structured debates.

Complementing training, extracurricular activities play a strategic role in the consolidation of practical skills. The DCNs encourage curricular internships, participation in conferences and simulations, complementary training courses, research and extension activities, as well as exchange and academic mobility programs. These experiences contribute to a comprehensive education, articulating theoretical and practical knowledge in line with market demands and the challenges of international action.

4 ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

This article analyzes the training of International Relations professionals in Brazil through a comparison of the curricula available between four representative courses: USP, UNESP, UFU and UFMG. From the structuring of the menus and the use of natural language processing (NLP) techniques and analytical visualizations, five dimensions were examined: competency profile, regional vs global approach, theoretical vs practical emphasis, insertion of technology and innovation, and the presence of themes related to sustainability and ESG. The results indicate convergences in theoretical training, but also reveal significant differences in terms of professional practice and updating in the face of contemporary challenges.

International Relations training in Brazil has undergone significant transformations, driven by changes in the international scenario, the evolution of the labor market and the advancement of disruptive technologies. With a growing demand for professionals trained to work in global contexts, it is essential to reflect on the adequacy of academic curricula to the

new requirements. The study seeks to analyze, comparatively, how different Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) structure their courses in order to develop essential competencies for the IR professional.

The literature highlights the interdisciplinary nature of the area of International Relations, which integrates fields such as political science, economics, law, and history. Authors such as Caligiuri et al. (1998) and Gereffi et al. (2005) point to the importance of intercultural, analytical and negotiation skills. Recently, studies such as Whitsed (2024) have emphasized the need for curricular internationalization and the inclusion of topics such as technology, sustainability, and competency-based training. The analytical dimensions in-depth in this research are, as shown in Table 1, as follows:

Table 1

Analytical Dimensions of the syllabus of IR courses

DIMENSÃO	DISCUSSÃO
Perfil de competências	Habilidades desenvolvidas: analíticas, interculturais, técnicas
Abordagem regional vs global	Foco em estudos de área, América Latina, globalização etc.
Ênfase teórica vs prática	Presença de metodologias aplicadas, simulações, projetos
Tecnologia e Inovação	Presença de conteúdos sobre tecnologia, IA, cibersegurança
Sustentabilidade e ESG	Disciplinas voltadas a meio ambiente, cooperação e justiça global

Source: The Authors (2025)

4.1 COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS – ANALYTICAL DIMENSIONS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COURSES

This research presents a comparative analysis of the International Relations and International Economic Relations courses offered. The comparison was structured based on five analytical dimensions: competency profile, regional vs. global approach, theoretical vs. practical emphasis, technology and innovation, and sustainability and ESG, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparative analysis of the analytical dimensions of international relations courses

Dimensão Analítica	USP	UNESP	UFU	UFMG
Perfil de competências	Forte base teórica, competências analíticas e políticas; menor ênfase prática	Forma profissionais com base sólida em teoria e segurança internacional	Perfil voltado à atuação estratégica e prática; destaque para negociação e comércio	Foco em competências econômicas, analíticas e diplomáticas; integração público/privado
Abordagem regional vs global	Predominância global, com menor foco em estudos regionais específicos	Abordagem regional bem desenvolvida (América Latina, estudos de área)	Inclui múltiplos estudos regionais e cenários internacionais	Combina regionalismo latino-americano com abordagens de conjuntura global
Ênfase teórica vs prática	Ênfase teórica marcante; prática ainda limitada	Equilíbrio entre teoria e prática; disciplinas aplicadas aparecem com frequência	Ênfase prática forte: comércio, diplomacia, segurança e extensão	Integra teoria e prática com disciplinas aplicadas (estatística, extensão, negociação)
Tecnologia e Inovação	Pouca presença explícita de temas ligados a tecnologia	Inovações metodológicas limitadas; foco tradicional	Disciplinas como 'Estudos Estratégicos' e 'Negociações Internacionais' abordam temas aplicados	Inclui economia digital, cenários, estatística e finanças — bom potencial para inovação
Sustentabilidade de e ESG	Temas como meio ambiente e desenvolvimento aparecem de forma pontual	Inclusão de desenvolvimento e direitos humanos, mas ESG como conceito ausente	Há abordagem sobre meio ambiente e geopolítica, mas ESG aparece de forma indireta	Ainda que não trate ESG diretamente, aborda desenvolvimento, ética e políticas públicas

Source: The Authors (2025)

The analysis shows that all courses offer a solid foundation in International Relations theory and in classical content such as economics, law and foreign policy. However, there are relevant differentiations between them. USP maintains a strongly theoretical and globalizing bias, while UNESP balances theory and practice with a regional emphasis. UFU stands out for its practical and strategic orientation, especially in trade and security. UFMG, on the other hand, has an economic background integrated with diplomacy, with attention to conjunctural analysis and university extension. In terms of technological innovation and ESG, the four institutions still have development potential, although UFMG and UFU have already demonstrated specific advances.

The qualitative textual analysis of the syllabuses shows significant differences in the way in which the International Relations courses at USP, UNESP, UFU and UFMG address certain contemporary central themes, whose presence and depth vary considerably between institutions. The selected themes — Technology, Negotiation, Foreign Trade, Development, Geopolitics and Foreign Policy — presented the highest rates of variation, revealing different pedagogical approaches and diverse curricular priorities.

With regard to technology, USP does not present structured content focused on innovation or technological application in International Relations, reinforcing its traditional and theoretical profile. UNESP addresses the topic in an incipient way, usually in methodological contexts. UFU and, above all, UFMG, on the other hand, show greater attention to the theme,

integrating it with the disciplines of scenario analysis, applied economics and university extension, reflecting an effort to update in the face of the digital transformations that impact the area.

The theme of international negotiation also presents a strong variation. While at USP the approach is marginal, with the absence of disciplines dedicated to negotiation practice, UNESP incorporates the theme in specific disciplines, especially in regional contexts. UFU stands out for a strong emphasis on diplomatic strategies and applied negotiation, while UFMG has a consistent practical focus, including content on international arbitration.

In relation to foreign trade, there is a gap at USP, which is not very dedicated to this theme. UNESP presents an intermediate approach, linking trade to regional integration processes. In contrast, UFU and UFMG give an in-depth treatment to the theme, with specific disciplines that articulate international trade, finance, and foreign economic policies.

The theme of development is addressed more consistently at UNESP, whose curriculum values critical and regional perspectives. At UFU, development is dealt with in conjunction with security and international cooperation, while UFMG connects it to public policies and the international political economy. USP, in turn, demonstrates a limited approach, with no significant emphasis on critical development perspectives.

The analysis of the geopolitical approach shows USP once again with a more theoretical and institutionalized treatment, detached from practical applications. UNESP articulates the theme with the Latin American reality, while UFU and UFMG integrate it in a more applied and strategic way, especially in articulation with security, international scenarios and active foreign policy.

Finally, the issue of foreign policy is treated with greater balance. USP adopts a traditional analytical perspective, centered on Brazilian foreign policy. UNESP balances theory and conjunctural analysis, while UFU and UFMG offer more integrated approaches, connecting foreign policy to the themes of security, economics and contemporary diplomacy.

In summary, the qualitative data reveal two major formative profiles: on the one hand, USP maintains a theoretical-classical model with less practical insertion; on the other hand, UFU and UFMG are advancing in the integration of applied, technological and strategic content. UNESP positions itself as an intermediary, with a good articulation between tradition and critical regionalism. These distinctions are relevant to understand the alignment — or the distance — between the curricula analyzed and the competencies required in the current global scenario.

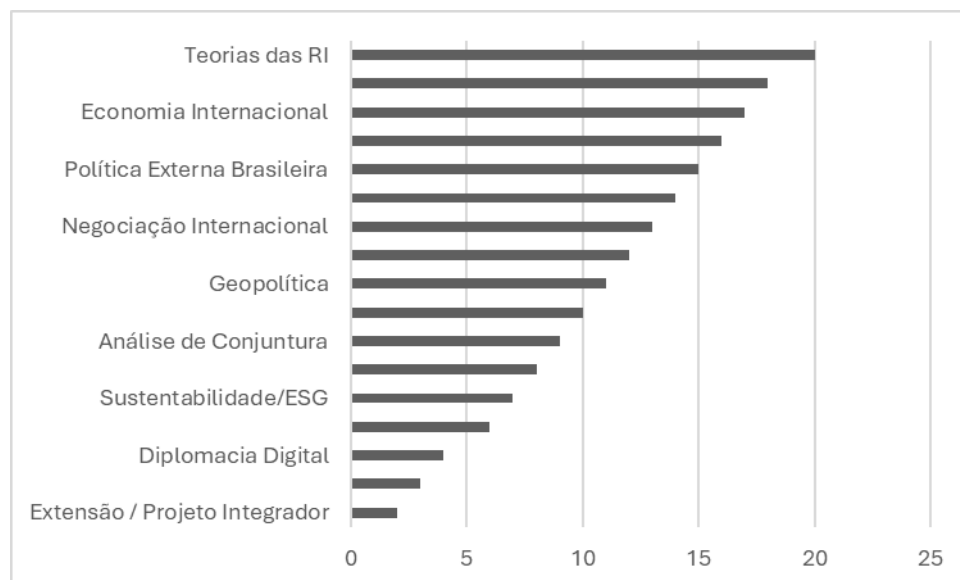
4.2 MOST RECURRENT CENTRAL THEMES AND GAPS IN THE SYLLABUS OF IR COURSES

Figure 1, presented below, illustrates the most recurrent central themes in the syllabuses of the International Relations courses analyzed, based on the total aggregate attendance between the institutions USP, UNESP, UFU and UFMG.

This representation allows the identification of the contents with the greatest incidence in the pedagogical projects, evidencing the thematic core common to the training, as well as the less explored areas, which may represent potential curricular gaps.

Figure 1

Central themes most recurrent in the syllabus of IR courses



Source: The Authors (2025)

The analysis of the total frequency of the topics covered in the course syllabus revealed that the most recurrent contents are Theory of International Relations, History, International Law, International Economics and Foreign Policy. These elements make up the common theoretical core of the formations in International Relations, evidencing a solid conceptual basis shared among the institutions analyzed. On the other hand, topics such as Technology and Development have a lower incidence in the curricular matrices, which suggests a still limited emphasis on aspects related to innovation, digital transformation and critical approaches to regional development. This discrepancy points to possible training gaps and indicates opportunities for curricular updating in line with the contemporary demands of the area.

The comparative analysis of the syllabuses revealed the existence of important thematic gaps in the curricula of International Relations courses, even among institutions of recognized academic excellence. Such gaps not only reflect an outdated face to the contemporary challenges of the global scenario, but also indicate a possible disconnection between the training offered and the skills required in the labor market and in the emerging international agenda.

One of the most evident points is the low insertion of content related to technology and innovation. The absence of disciplines focused on digital transformation, artificial intelligence, big data, digital diplomacy, or cybersecurity highlights a worrying gap, especially considering the growing influence of emerging technologies on diplomacy, international trade, and global governance.

International negotiation, although central to the practical performance of the professional in the area, also appears marginally in some courses, such as at USP and, to a lesser extent, at UNESP. Only UFU and UFMG demonstrate more consistent approaches to the subject, indicating that there is still a mismatch between the traditional curriculum and the interpersonal and strategic skills demanded in multilateral environments.

Another point of attention refers to foreign trade, which is underexplored in most of the courses, limiting the training of internationalists able to work with international operations, global market analysis and trade policies. This absence is especially critical in view of the central role of foreign trade in the Brazilian economy and in the international performance of companies and governments.

Sustainability and the ESG agenda are almost non-existent in the menus, which contrasts with the prominence that these themes have been gaining at the international level and in the public and private sectors. The lack of disciplines dedicated to global socio-environmental issues, corporate responsibility and sustainable governance represents a strategic gap that can compromise the employability of graduates in key sectors of the contemporary economy.

Topics such as economic and financial diplomacy, scenario prospecting and international intelligence appear in isolation, with greater incidence only at UFMG. These competencies are essential for risk analysis, strategic decision-making, and work in international organizations or think tanks, which reinforces the need for their systematic incorporation into curricular matrices.

Another significant void concerns digital rights and internet governance, topics absent in all courses, despite the growing importance of technological regulation, data protection and digital disputes in the international scenario. The absence of this dimension can compromise the training of professionals prepared to deal with the new configurations of global power.

In addition, there is a limited regional focus, concentrated mostly in Latin America and in some cases in Europe, with a low presence of studies focused on Asia and Africa. This gap restricts the understanding of emerging geopolitical dynamics and limits training for broader and more diverse multilateral contexts.

Although there are relevant university extension initiatives in courses such as those at UFU and UFMG, there is a lack of consistent methodological articulations in other institutions, which compromises the integration between theory and practice and weakens the formative experience in the field.

There is also a recurrent omission of topics related to diversity, such as international relations and gender and race issues. The absence of an intersectional approach in the menus suggests the maintenance of a vision that is still Eurocentric and little sensitive to the structural inequalities that cross the international system.

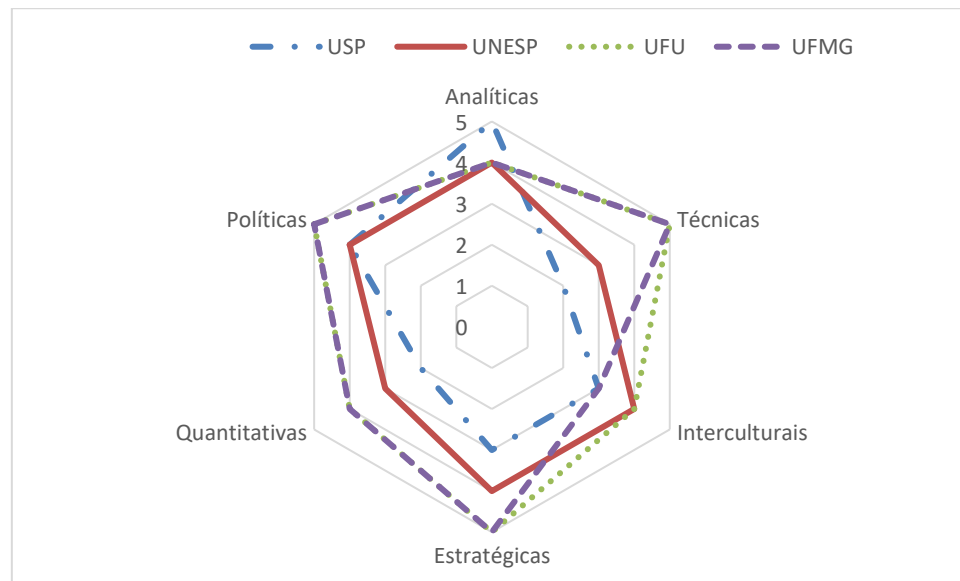
In summary, the data point to the urgent need to update and diversify the curriculum in International Relations courses, in order to expand the adherence between academic training and the complex demands of the twenty-first century. Overcoming these gaps is essential to ensure the training of professionals who are more complete, critical, and prepared to work in dynamic, unequal, and technologically transformed global contexts.

4.3 MAP OF COMPETENCIES BY INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS COURSE

Figure 3 presents a comparative radar of the formative competencies developed in the International Relations courses of the institutions. The construction of the competency map, within the scope of the curriculum analysis, was carried out based on a qualitative and inductive approach based on the content analysis of the disciplinary syllabus. The methodology adopted followed three main steps: (1) definition of the dimensions of competencies, (2) extraction and categorization of the contents of the menus, and (3) attribution of intensity to the identified competencies.

Figure 2

Map of competencies developed by IR course



Source: The Authors (2025)

The interpretation of the data obtained reveals significant differences between the curricular profiles of the institutions analyzed, reflecting different pedagogical approaches and training priorities. The courses at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) and the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) stand out for presenting a greater balance between theoretical and practical training, in addition to a more expressive incorporation of components related to innovation, such as disciplines focused on technology, international negotiation and extension activities. These elements give the courses a more dynamic profile and aligned with the demands of the contemporary market.

The São Paulo State University (UNESP) shows a strong emphasis on regional approaches, with emphasis on content focused on development, Latin American integration and local social dynamics. In addition, it presents a consistent performance in the development of diverse competencies, demonstrating a pedagogical project that seeks to critically articulate the theoretical foundations of the area with its application in specific geopolitical contexts.

On the other hand, the course at the University of São Paulo (USP) maintains an eminently theoretical and globalizing profile, focusing on the conceptual consolidation of International Relations. Although this approach reinforces academic excellence and analytical depth, there is less emphasis on practical and technological components, which may limit training for more applied and multifunctional professional contexts.

These distinctions, evidenced through semantic analysis and visual representations, demonstrate the coexistence of different curricular models, reflecting both institutional diversity and different understandings of the formative role of the International Relations course in contemporary Brazil.

4.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE ANALYSIS OF THE CURRICULA

The comparative analysis between the International Relations courses at USP, UNESP, UFU and UFMG reveals the coexistence of different training models in Brazilian higher education. This diversity is positive, as it allows the adaptation of curricula to different institutional and regional profiles. However, the discrepancy between the levels of insertion of contemporary training practices, such as digital skills, international negotiation and sustainability, points to a need for pedagogical revision in some institutions.

Courses with greater practical and technological insertion, such as those at UFU and UFMG, demonstrate greater adherence to the new demands of the global labor market, while courses with a more theoretical focus, such as USP, maintain academic excellence, but may signal the need for updates in the face of new professional paradigms. The mapping of the competencies developed reinforces this conclusion, indicating that the courses with the greatest balance between theory and practice are also those that advance the most in curricular innovation.

The analysis of the syllabus shows a strong convergence between the courses regarding theoretical training and the classical foundations of International Relations, with emphasis on the consistent presence of disciplines related to IR theories, the history of international relations, international law and economics. These components structure the common core of training, indicating a solid and widely shared foundation among institutions.

However, there is a significant differentiation in terms of methodological approach, thematic focus and integration of contemporary competencies. The course at the University of São Paulo (USP) has a markedly theoretical-academic profile, with an emphasis on conceptual content and global reach. This orientation, although it ensures analytical depth, reveals a low insertion of components focused on professional practice, technological innovation and regionalism, which limits its direct connection with the demands of the labor market and the national reality.

The São Paulo State University (UNESP), in turn, demonstrates a more expressive balance between theory and practice, with a good presence of regional studies and a focus

on Latin American social and political dynamics. His pedagogical project adopts a more traditional methodological approach, but sensitive to issues of development and regional context.

The course at the Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) is distinguished by its training focused on practice and strategy, effectively incorporating disciplines linked to international negotiation, security and university extension activities. This profile suggests an effort to align academic content with professional applicability, with a focus on the training of internationalists able to work in complex and dynamic contexts.

Finally, the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) presents a training model that seeks to integrate economics, diplomacy and conjuncture analysis, also presenting significant advances in the insertion of content related to technological innovation. Its consistent performance in all the dimensions analyzed indicates a broad and updated curricular proposal, compatible with the contemporary challenges of the area

4.5 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE INTERVIEWS

The in-depth interviews, conducted with professionals and professors in the area, followed the following script, in a method aligned with Brinkmann and Kvale (2015).

Table 3

Interview script

Question 01 - Considering the syllabuses of the International Relations course developed by the Universities: USP, UNESP, UFU, UFMG, what factors influence the preparation of the respective syllabus?
Question 02 - From the theoretical, practical, regional and technological components, present in the elaboration of the International Relations course, highlight the impacts on the construction of the menus.
Question 03 - Comment on the pedagogical projects and the interface with the training process of International Relations Professionals.
Question 04 - The current moment, the twenty-first century, has been requiring the need to acquire Digital Literacy as a strategic competence in the performance of International Relations Professionals. To what extent have the programs of the International Relations Course been incorporating such trends?
Question 05 - What is the role of interdisciplinarity in training in International Relations according to the research data?
Question 06 - To what extent has the inclusion of topics such as ESG and sustainability been addressed in the menus?

Source: The Authors

Regarding the first question, it is clear that the elaboration of the syllabus of International Relations courses is influenced by three main vectors: the institutional profile,

the regional context and the insertion of contemporary practices. USP adopts a theoretical and academic approach, while UFU and UFMG prioritize applied content aligned with the market. UNESP values the Latin American regional dimension, giving specificity to training. The inclusion of topics such as innovation, sustainability, and digital literacy — more present at UFMG and UFU — shows the degree of updating of the courses in the face of the demands of the contemporary international scenario.

Regarding the second question, it was raised that the analysis of the syllabus of the International Relations courses reveals that their structure is influenced by four main components: theoretical, practical, regional and technological. All courses maintain a solid theoretical base, but UFU and UFMG stand out for integrating practices such as international negotiation and conjuncture analysis, favoring employability. UNESP values the regional component, with a focus on Latin America, promoting local contextualization. Technological content, on the other hand, is rarely present, except at UFMG, which tends to address digital innovation and digital diplomacy. The lack of balance between these components compromises the preparation for the current challenges of the profession.

Regarding the third question, it is clear that the pedagogical projects of the International Relations courses analyzed reveal different formative conceptions, reflecting institutional identities and different degrees of alignment with current professional demands. USP adopts a theoretical-reflective model, focused on academic production, but with practical and technological limitations. UNESP seeks a balance between theory and practice, with a strong Latin American regional contextualization, favoring actions in public policies and regional cooperation. The UFU and UFMG institutions present more strategic and applied proposals, valuing market-oriented skills, which strengthens professional insertion in diverse and interdisciplinary contexts. These differences express a gap between academic tradition and practical innovation in the training of internationalists.

Regarding the fourth question, the analysis of the International Relations courses of the universities reveals that digital literacy — essential in digitized international contexts — is still incorporated in an unequal and incipient way in the curricular structures. UFM is the most advanced in the inclusion of content on technology and digital diplomacy, while UFU has punctual insertions, with potential for expansion. However, USP and UNESP demonstrate low insertion of digital skills, which can impact the training of professionals able to work in technologically integrated environments. The absence of a systematic approach to digital

literacy indicates the urgent need for curriculum revision, with a view to forming a professional profile aligned with the demands of a globalized, interdependent and data-driven world.

As for the fifth question, interdisciplinarity is recognized as a positive and structuring characteristic in the courses analyzed, allowing the integration of fields such as political science, economics, law and history. However, the research points out that this integration is not always accompanied by a methodological update that dialogues with emerging themes, such as ESG, artificial intelligence, and digital diplomacy. Interdisciplinarity, to be effective, also needs to be transversal and applied, going beyond theoretical juxtapositions to train versatile professionals in complex and multidimensional environments.

Regarding the last question, it was concluded that the presence of topics related to sustainability and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) is described as punctual and generic. They often appear diluted in development or human rights disciplines, without a specific or strategic approach. This represents an important limitation, considering that these issues have become central to the international agenda of companies, governments, and multilateral organizations. The absence of disciplines focused on ESG compromises the ability of graduates to understand and act in the new global regulatory frameworks.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The analysis of the Brazilian foreign trade flow in 2024 reveals a significant surplus, although lower than the record of 2023. The Southeast region continues to be a vital hub for the country's foreign trade, with each state contributing differently according to its productive vocations. Diversification in exports and growing demand for imports indicate a recovering economy and greater integration with international trade.

The comparative analysis of the syllabuses shows different levels of curricular updating and adherence to contemporary demands, such as sustainability, digital literacy and technological innovation, which reinforces the need for greater integration between theory and practice, as well as institutional actions aimed at interdisciplinarity, internationalization of the curriculum and citizenship education guided by global values.

On the other hand, more traditional training, adopted by USP and UNESP, despite academic excellence, has less insertion of practical and technological components. Although they robustly address the political and theoretical aspects of the discipline, the absence of disciplines focused on digital innovation, artificial intelligence applied to international scenarios, global data governance, or emerging technologies in diplomacy, represent a gap

in the skills required by a market that values versatile professionals, technically up-to-date and able to work in interdisciplinary environments.

It is noted that the sustainability and ESG agenda, increasingly central in multilateral organizations, global corporations, and financial institutions, appears punctually in the menus analyzed, generally diluted in generic content on development and human rights. This limitation can compromise the ability of future professionals to act fluently in the new normative and operational structures that shape contemporary international governance.

The current job market therefore demands an International Relations professional with skills beyond the theoretical domain — requiring skills such as intercultural communication, political risk management, conflict resolution, data-driven analytical skills, and fluency in collaborative digital environments. Such requirements point to the need for a more integrated, transversal curriculum review connected with active pedagogical practices, international experiences and inter-institutional projects.

Although the courses analyzed demonstrate theoretical consistency and interdisciplinarity, their compatibility with the new demands of the labor market varies significantly. Those that more explicitly incorporate active methodologies, practical experiences, and emerging competencies tend to train qualified professionals to act strategically in an international environment in constant change.

From the analysis of the syllabus, competencies and curricular themes, it is concluded that the International Relations courses in Brazil maintain a solid basic education, but present different levels of updating in relation to the contemporary demands of the labor market. The integration between theory and practice, the insertion of emerging technologies, the approach to ESG, and the emphasis on active methodologies are important differentials for the future of the profession.

It is recommended that educational institutions review their pedagogical projects in the light of these requirements, promoting greater articulation between technical, analytical, socio-environmental and interpersonal skills. The adoption of continuous curriculum evaluation mechanisms, based on indicators of employability and international insertion, can contribute to making courses more dynamic, responsive and aligned with the global scenario.

The present study presented the analysis of curricula in the Southeast region, except for one, because the curriculum was not available. As suggestions for future studies, it is recommended to expand the analysis to other regions of Brazil, contextualizing with the characteristics, regional differences and deepening the discussion on emerging technologies.

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