



A critical reflection on internationalizing Gender Equality certification: The case of Brazilian academia

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Introduction

The global higher education sector is organised around dominant discourses of internationalisation which are often portrayed as positive, romanticised and 'sticky' despite the underpinning postcolonial hierarchies and reinforcement of binaries that they can dictate (Tzanakou, 2021; Tzanakou and Henderson, 2021; Morley et al. 2020). Discourses of internationalisation although presented as neutral, they often perpetuate colonial legacies of 'Western'/'Westernised' education and episteme, and reinforce divides between the Global North and the Global South. Internationalisation and neoliberalism in higher education is going hand in hand reinforcing each other, nurturing an environment where individuals are responsible for their pathways in higher education overlooking structural and historical pervasive systems of oppression. While internationalisation has been discussed in relation to academic (im)mobility and careers (Tzanakou, 2021; Tzanakou and Henderson, 2021; Morley et al. 2020), it has been less discussed in relation to gender equality and EDI certification in higher education and the role of international partnerships in this 'internationalisation' process, which this paper aims to address.

Gender equality is a fundamental human right and essential for a fair and just society. Moreover, having a diverse scientific community, that includes women, is the way to a broader range of perspectives and approaches, which can lead, amongst other things, to better scientific outcomes and innovation (Nielsen *et al.*, 2017; Hofstra *et al.*, 2020). Unfortunately, only 33% of the world's researchers are women (UNESCO, 2021), suggesting that women face higher barriers and challenges in pursuing and being retained in scientific careers. It is imperative to address this issue and foster more inclusive, accessible and diverse scientific communities. Failure in doing so will result in a waste of valuable talent and expertise, which undermines the overall potential for scientific progress and discovery.

To address inequalities in the scientific and academic community, systematic macro level efforts have often been undertaken within certification frameworks such as the Athena Swan and the Race Charter Mark in the UK. The Athena SWAN is seen as a comprehensive and successful Certification and Award Scheme (CAS) and has been recently 'internationalised' considering its expansion in Ireland in 2015 and its adaptation in Australia (2018), USA (2017) and Canada (2019) (Tzanakou et al. 2021), which are English-speaking countries, part of the Global North. More recently, the Athena Swan has 'travelled' to the Global South with Advance HE - the body which oversees the Athena Swan and Race Charter Mark - collaborating with the British Council to introduce gender equality frameworks in India and Brazil through establishing collaborative mentoring partnerships between UK – 'experienced in Athena Swan' - and Indian/Brazilian HEIs.

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In this article, we critically discuss and reflect on the internationalisation of Global North gender equality certification in the Global South. We do this by reviewing how EDI certification such as the Athena Swan was ‘internationalised’, being transferred to the Brazilian academic context. First, we look at how this framework was developed in Brazil supported by bilateral collaborative partnerships between UK and Brazilian institutions. As part of this process, we reflect on how our partnership – that we perceived as a collaborative feminist project aiming at addressing inequalities - was operationalised and to what extent it reified or disrupted postcolonial legacies and geographical epistemic hierarchies. Second, we focus on the operationalisation of this framework in Brazil in terms of its common (between the UK and Brazil) and distinct challenges of Brazilian academia and provide recommendations that could support systematic EDI efforts to advance equalities in Brazilian academia.

This paper is structured as follows: we start with providing the context of our international partnership between the UK and Brazilian academic institutions and the purpose of the wider partnerships’ call by the funding body. We then reflect on our experience of working together, the assumptions of the funding call and our efforts in developing a trusted partnership. We then move on to look at the internationalisation of EDI certification in Brazil, starting with a brief overview of EDI Certification and Award Schemes (CAS), highlighting the importance of understanding the political and socio-cultural context of Brazil. In this section, we also identify common challenges that both UK and Brazil contexts face in the implementation of gender and EDI certification, discuss how the partnerships contributed to the introduced EDI framework and we provide recommendations for conditions required for making a systematic EDI effort - like CAS - work in the Brazilian context. Finally, in the concluding discussion we demonstrate our ambivalence towards the internationalisation of the EDI certification in Brazil and the way that international partnerships were operationalised.

Brazil-UK partnership project: the context

In 2021, we led one of the projects selected in the British Council's “Women in Science: Gender Equality Partnerships Call”. The call aimed at facilitating partnerships between UK HEIs (HEIs) certified by the Athena Swan Charter and Brazilian HEIs. Nine partnerships were successful in the call establishing collaborations between nine UK and 20 Brazilian HEIs for a year. The call objective was to ‘mentor’ Brazilian partners in advancing gender equality in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine) tapping into the UK experience of Athena Swan. In addition, the call suggested that the successful partnership projects would contribute towards the design of a Gender Equality Framework for HEIs in Brazil building on the Athena Swan Charter in the UK.

While there were common elements across the UK-Brazil successful partnerships, each one was designed differently often reflecting the UK partners’ expertise and needs of

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3 Brazilian partners. Our partnership (Oxford Brookes University, Fluminense Federal University
4 and Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul), following the call objective, aimed at sharing
5 our institutional and departmental experiences in relation to our gender equality journey within
6 the context of Athena Swan charter in the UK. Thus, we co-designed - at proposal stage - a
7 structured programme of workshops that provided an overview of the institutional gender
8 equality journey with emphasis on conducting self-assessment, ensuring commitment from
9 senior leadership, data collection and analysis, challenges in designing and implementing
10 action plans. We also captured topics around leadership, gender-based violence, work life
11 balance and many others. The overall aim was to produce data and capacity building
12 resources that could provide a starting point and influence institutional policies and practices
13 towards gender equality in HEIs in Brazil. However, it was also a unique opportunity - although
14 not acknowledged in the call - for the UK partner to take stock and reflect on their institutional
15 and departmental gender equality journeys in the context of Athena Swan and challenge what
16 it has been taken for granted. It was thus considered as a space for knowledge exchange and
17 sharing, mutual learning and capacity-building.

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27 Alongside the partnership projects, the funding body was overseeing the development
28 of an Athena Swan Charter framework to be introduced in Brazil supported by Advance HE in
29 the UK and a Brazilian organisation who helped in translating and contextualising the
30 framework in the Brazilian academic environment. These stakeholders organised five
31 workshops where they presented the framework and invited participants from the partnerships
32 to offer comments that would help tailor the framework to the needs of Brazilian academia.
33 These workshops focused on presenting the Brazil-UK partnerships projects and identifying
34 pertinent issues; challenges faced by women in STEMM in Brazil and discussion of the Athena
35 Swan principles; presentation and discussion of first draft of the framework and its
36 accompanying guidance modules and forms. The framework was finalised in 2022^[1] (British
37 Council, 2022) published along with guidance modules (self-assessment; communication,
38 consultation and engagement; data collection and analysis; effective and measurable action
39 planning) to facilitate HEIs to self-assess their organisation in relation to gender and race.
40 There are ten underlying principles to the framework that focus on gender and race. The self-
41 assessment form is similar to the form in the UK Athena Swan framework. Participation in this
42 framework is voluntary for Brazilian HEIs in a self-paced manner since peer review panels and
43 a wider coordination mechanism to evaluate potential Brazilian HEIs engagement has not
44 been established.

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58 **International collaborations: Working across cultural contexts on feminist**
59 **projects: potential for sisterhood?**
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3 This partnership was the first time that the authors collaborated. While the authors are coming
4 from different disciplinary perspectives, we shared common values (justice, fairness, open and
5 honest dialogue, inclusivity, transparency, democratic participation and decision making) and
6 most importantly a desire and willingness to address inequalities in higher education. This was
7 a significant foundation for our international partnership and since this was a feminist project
8 it provided great potential for building 'global sisterhood'.
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12 However, some conditions in the funding call challenged this potential. First, while the
13 funding call aimed at advancing gender equality in STEMM in Brazil through mentoring of
14 Brazilian institutions by UK researchers and institutions, the leading institution and beneficiary
15 had to be the UK one. The emphasis on mentoring and the leading UK partner introduced
16 power relationships based on colonial logic and geographical dichotomies of the Global North
17 and South, 'advanced-less advanced' partners valorising the UK system. Furthermore, while
18 UK HEIs have experience of gender equality work and initiatives through Athena Swan, they
19 have not yet addressed inequalities in academia and there is still more work to be done.
20 Second, the initial call did not allow for funds to be allocated to the Brazilian partners although
21 they had to undertake many efforts – on top of their current academic workload – to attend
22 and contribute workshops of the partnership and the funding body, and do internal work within
23 their own institution at adverse times - Bolsonaro government had reduced budgets in higher
24 education - when gender equality was not considered an issue. Despite contacting the funding
25 body to ask permission to allocate funds to Brazilian partners, we were informed that it was
26 not an eligible cost. Providing sufficient resources to institutions that work on institutional
27 change has been reiterated as a key challenge for designing and implementing effective and
28 impactful gender and EDI efforts (Tzanakou et al. 2021).
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30 While these issues could have negatively influenced our international collaboration and
31 relationship, we acknowledged how problematic these were and made explicit - from the
32 beginning - that this collaboration is equitable and is not based on colonial and global south-
33 north assumptions but on mutual exchange of knowledge and expertise. Thus, a mentoring
34 contract was drawn together with explicit information about what each partner wants to
35 achieve and the ground rules for this partnership being:
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51 "We will have an honest, trusting, supportive and open relationship with the opportunity for
52 two-way constructive criticism."
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55 By embracing these principles, the partnership aimed to foster equality and decolonise
56 research practices, ensuring that the partnership was truly collaborative, inclusive, and
57 reflective of the diverse voices and contributions involved. This contract introduced an
58 approach that prioritised the active participation and contributions of researchers from both
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3 countries based on awareness of colonial histories and mutual respect, rather than adopting
4 a top-down approach where knowledge is solely imparted by UK based researchers. For
5 example, the UK partner mentioned in the contract:
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9 'We envisage that this partnership will provide space for reflection and opportunities to
10 learn from our Brazilian partners about how we could think differently about our gender
11 equality efforts and what we can improve further.'
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16 Instead of mentoring, we thus approached our relationship as a peer coaching and mentoring
17 relationship which is fluid (De Haan & Sils, 2012) becoming critical friends to support our efforts
18 for advancing gender equality within and beyond the project.
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20 Strategies such as co-designing research agendas, promoting joint decision-making
21 processes, and providing equal opportunities for input and leadership roles were also
22 undertaken. For example, the focus of the workshops were co-decided at the proposal stage
23 and one was purposely left open for Brazilian partners to decide during the project depending
24 on their preferences and needs. Furthermore, there was a conscious effort to recognise and
25 value diverse perspectives, experiences, and methodologies from both Brazilian and UK
26 researchers, thereby challenging any potential hierarchies or power imbalances within the
27 partnership. In some instances, we used workshops to co-create strategies and activities for
28 advancing equality. Ad-hoc meetings were also organised based on partners' needs and any
29 partner could initiate these meetings.
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36 During the workshops of the partnership, key issues and associated experiences
37 shared by members of both countries were approached through a context conscious lens,
38 under which local distinctive features and institutional background were considered. An
39 important lesson learned was the need to capture information on local demographics, needs
40 and the role of actors in enacting local change. While the Brazilian partners had more
41 established networks and channels with women and women of colour through their
42 engagement in the Parent in Science movement, the UK partners had experience
43 experimenting with institutional interventions during their Athena Swan experience. Our
44 partnership allowed space for the acknowledgement of intersectional disadvantage and bias
45 of researchers. In Brazil, it mainly concerned the access and attainment of indigenous and
46 Black populations into academia. In the UK, considering the significant presence of foreign
47 faculty in UK HEIs and that academic migration is intertwined with internationalisation issues,
48 migrant and foreign academic staff pose a similar but different challenge (Tsouroufli, 2023).
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57 Finally, we want to draw attention on our common political identities as feminists and how
58 our positioning has been shaped from our identities as white women with children and these
59 informed the way we experienced this partnership as feminist sisterhood. A sisterhood where
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3 we can collectively support each other (Macoun and Miller, 2014) but also self-reflect,
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5 problematise and disrupt practices that can perpetuate dominant culture especially in relation
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7 to intercultural work (Asher, 2003). One author based in the UK is a migrant academic, not a
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9 native speaker, coming from South Europe which might have heightened the awareness of
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11 power dynamics and facilitated building rapport with the Brazilian counterparts. While
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13 academic scholars have challenged the romanticised discourse of global or colonising
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15 sisterhood (Tsouroufli, 2023; Emejulu, 2018; Hundle et al, 2019; Collins, 2000), we felt that
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17 despite colonial assumptions underlying the funding of our collaboration and our different
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19 disciplinary backgrounds (a neuroscientist, a life scientist, a political scientist and an
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21 interdisciplinary social scientist), it was possible to build solidarity, develop equal relations and
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23 mobilise our experience, skills and networks towards a common purpose.
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26 **EDI certification and its internationalisation in Brazil**

27 Before we critically reflect on the internationalisation discourse in relation to transferring a UK
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29 based certification scheme such as Athena Swan to the Brazilian context, it is important to
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31 discuss EDI Certification and Award Schemes (CAS).

32 CAS for gender, diversity and inclusion are initiatives aimed at promoting EDI values
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34 and acknowledge organisations that are working to create inclusive, equitable, and diverse
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36 scientific research and educational environments. CAS can be a driver for structural and
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38 cultural change within and beyond academia (Tzanakou et al., 2021). A recent study on
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40 certification and award schemes identified 113 certification and award schemes across Europe
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42 and beyond (Nason and Sangiuliano, 2020). CAS typically involves a set of criteria and
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44 standards that organisations must meet in order to be certified or granted an award. The
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46 criteria for CAS can vary, but usually include collecting data, conducting a self-assessment of
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48 the organisation and designing evidence-informed interventions that concern the
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50 representation of marginalised groups in leadership positions, development of EDI policies
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52 and practices.

53 CAS for EDI can have several benefits, such as encouraging organisations to prioritise
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55 EDI values, to recognise and promote best practices, fostering a culture of EDI, and attracting
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57 funding and talent. Nevertheless, there are concerns of becoming a compliance exercise and,
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59 conversely perpetuate inequalities, particularly when institutions merely go through the
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motions and place the administrative burden on underrepresented groups, who may even
incur personal and professional costs as a result (Tzanakou and Pearce, 2019; Ovseiko et al.,
2017; Caffrey et al., 2016). Studies on gender equality and diversity (Loke, 2015; Cuthbert et

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3 al. 2023) have argued that EDI challenges are often framed as located within individuals -
4 women and/or Black and minority ethnic groups - where individuals need to be 'fixed' to fit the
5 western white male ideal academic norm in neoliberal academia overlooking the significance
6 of fixing organisational structures and culture (Ahmet, 2021). CAS, depending on how they
7 are framed and how they are implemented within various organisational contexts, can lead to
8 rather ambiguous actions: they could aim or used to fix individuals, but more importantly they
9 could have great potential in shifting the focus to the organisational policies, practices and
10 culture. Organisations are asked to self-assess their policies, analyse their data and identify
11 challenges and priorities for the future. Such efforts need to be underpinned by commitment,
12 gender/EDI expertise and competence especially at leadership level since there is a tendency
13 to consider inequalities as 'numerical disparities', often external to the organisation, shifting
14 responsibility away from the latter (Cuthbert et al. 2023). On the contrary, it is necessary for
15 all stakeholders involved in CAS to recognise that inequalities are structural and they reflect
16 power relationships in order to effectively produce change (ibid). Therefore, we view CAS as
17 a valuable starting point, especially when they are approached as shifting the focus to the
18 organisation and the wider academic system to reflect on academic inequalities, identify
19 challenges and prioritise EDI programmes and activities.

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22 Furthermore, certification can be considered as a neoliberal practice (driven by
23 benchmarking and metrics) and can be co-opted towards meeting business and political
24 interests (such as 'pinkwashing' in Saba (2023); Shafie (2015)). However, it can provide
25 opportunities to collectively organise against neoliberal practices and offer leverage in
26 changing workplaces (Tzanakou and Pearce, 2019) especially if it is underpinned by
27 decolonisation, inclusion and indigenisation principles which critique pinkwashing as an
28 approach that does not engage with equality for colonised populations. Furthermore, in
29 alignment with the coloniality of knowledge, certification as a practice flourishing in the Global
30 North, it can be considered a colonial practice imposing a particular way of thinking around
31 how organisations should be addressing inequalities (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Imas and Weston,
32 2012). In the case of internationalising EDI certification, it is important to consider whether
33 certification sustains colonial practices or to what extent it can be used to shift attention
34 towards localised contexts and cultural specificities. In the higher education sphere, scholars
35 advocate for a decolonial approach to higher education which both acknowledges the
36 influence of colonial structures but also advocates the deconstruction of neoliberal
37 interpretations of diversity which tend to rely on limited understandings of culture and
38 emphasise difference through adopting a deficit perspective (Hundle, 2019; Walcott, 2019).
39 Global North and Anglocentric EDI CAS can be considered as mainstream approaches to
40 change and problem solving, which perpetuate colonial patterns highlighting the need for
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3 developing perspectives and decolonial futures that could disrupt this coloniality (Amsler et al.
4 2020; Stein et al. 2022;)

6 Similarly to organisations and companies across the world (Ozbilgin and Erbil, 2021), HEIs
7 have been under pressure to mitigate workplace inequalities, sometimes through CAS. For
8 example, in the UK, the Athena Swan Charter^[2] was introduced for UK HEIs to promote and
9 support gender equality in HEIs. Since its launch in 2005, it has led to better awareness and
10 more discussions of structural inequalities (Tzanakou and Pearce, 2019; Ovseiko et al., 2017;
11 Caffrey et al., 2016) followed by numerous institutional and departmental action plans that
12 aimed to address the challenges of UK HEIs. In 2016, another CAS, the Race Equality Charter
13 (REC) was launched by the same body that oversees Athena Swan, aiming at addressing
14 racial inequalities in HEIs. The REC shares similarities with the Athena Swan regarding
15 processes and data but also in terms of the benefits and concerns raised (Tzanakou and
16 Pearce, 2019; Tzanakou, 2019; Bhopal and Henderson, 2019). There has been a wider
17 debate in UK HE about the possibility of merging these CAS to prevent additional workload
18 (Bhopal and Henderson, 2019). While a single charter risks the dilution of focus on race or
19 gender and the possibility of competing against each other in terms of prioritisation of actions,
20 a single charter could facilitate a more intersectional approach to addressing HE inequalities
21 and simultaneously save resources (Tzanakou et al. 2020). The Athena Swan is seen as a
22 successful certification and award scheme considering its internationalisation and expansion
23 in Ireland in 2015 and its adaptation in Australia (2018), USA (2017) and Canada (2019)
24 (Tzanakou et al. 2021). Advance HE has been working with the British Council to introduce
25 gender equality frameworks based on Athena Swan in India and Brazil. Focusing on the
26 Brazilian framework, we look closely at the Brazilian context and discuss how this CAS was
27 internationalised in the Brazilian identifying common and distinct challenges between the UK
28 and Brazilian contexts in implementing a meaningful EDI CAS that can advance equalities in
29 academia.

46 ***The Brazilian context for EDI***

48 Scholarly work has continuously demonstrated that EDI work is context specific (Ní Laoire et
49 al. 2021; Erdur, 2020; Bader et al. 2022; Kusku et al. 2021; Georgiadou and Syed, 2021;
50 Kollen, 2019) and we need to better understand contexts of EDI and diversity management
51 work beyond the Global North focus (Erdur, 2020). In Brazil, there is a particular cultural,
52 political and economic context which must be considered. Brazil is a diverse country with a
53 population composed of different ethnic and racial groups. Like in many other countries,
54 women, Black and Indigenous people are largely underrepresented, especially in leadership
55 and decision-making positions within the Brazilian academic community (Valentova *et al.*,

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3 2017; Morcelle and Ludwig, 2019; Areas *et al.*, 2020). Brazil's higher education (HE) system
4 comprises both publicly and privately funded institutions, with 88% of HEIs being private,
5 encompassing both profit and non-profit entities. Public universities receive funding from
6 Federal, State, and Municipal governments, with Federal and State-public HEIs offering
7 tuition-free education. Brazil is notably active in producing scientific publications, ranking 13th
8 globally in terms of research articles and reviews (Web of Science Group, 2019) which are
9 predominantly generated within public HEIs, accounting for 95% of scientific papers.
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14 Gender and racial disparities persist within academia and STEM fields in Brazil. In
15 terms of student access, over 50% of students are women while in 2017, women comprised
16 54% of those who earned PhDs (Marques, 2020). Women remain underrepresented in
17 leadership positions and in STEM subjects; for instance, according to the Census of Higher
18 Education (2019) women account for only 13.3% of undergraduate students in Computing and
19 Information Technology. In 2019, Black women aged 18 to 24 had an adjusted net attendance
20 rate of 22.3%, nearly 50% lower than white women (40.9%) and almost 30% lower than white
21 men (30.5%). The lowest adjusted net HE attendance rate was observed among Black men
22 (15.7%) (IBGE- Gender Statistics (2021)). In Brazil, race/ethnicity categories in the official
23 Brazilian census are determined along a continuum of skin colour, ranging from very fair to
24 very dark skin. Individuals self-declare their racial identity based on the official IBGE
25 categories, which include "branca" (White), "preta" (Black), "parda" (Brown), "amarela"
26 (Yellow/Asian), and "indígena" (Indigenous). In Brazil, there exists a common distinction
27 between those who identify as Black (individuals with dark skin) and Brown (individuals with
28 light skin within the Black community). Nevertheless, according to IBGE, the categories "preta"
29 and "parda" are combined as "negra". Here, we adopt the term "Black" as a reference to
30 "negra", encompassing both "preta" and "parda" categories.
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41 In recent years, Brazil has witnessed a rise in the number of black undergraduate
42 students in universities, largely due to the success of affirmative action programs, particularly
43 racial quotas in Federal HEIs. Affirmative action in Brazil was introduced in the early 2000s.
44 These actions have primarily targeted Black students, Indigenous students, and individuals
45 with disabilities, historically underrepresented groups in Brazilian HEIs. The University of
46 Brasília (UnB) in 2003 became the first federal university to adopt affirmative action. By 2011,
47 115 public institutions had implemented various forms of affirmative action policies for
48 underrepresented groups. In 2012, quota legislation (Law No. 12.711, dated 29 August 2012)
49 mandated Brazilian federal universities to reserve a proportion of places for low-income, Black,
50 and Indigenous students. The proportion of students benefiting from social and racial quotas
51 increased annually, reaching 39% in 2019 (Heringer, 2024). Consequently, the quota law and
52 other affirmative actions implemented in HEIs have effectively contributed to democratising
53 access to federal universities and addressing historical racial disparities (Heringer, 2024).
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3 Interestingly, affirmative actions based on gender are not common. Compared to students and
4 graduates, as women progress towards academic staff and researcher roles, the proportion
5 of women is decreasing (British Council, 2019; Valentova et al 2017; Areas et al. 2020).
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8 The cultural context of Brazilian academia is historically shaped by inequality and
9 exclusion, particularly for women, racial and ethnic minorities, and the LGBTQ+ community.
10 Women, especially women of colour and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, still
11 face compounded challenges in accessing academia, and experience discrimination and bias
12 in their professional lives (Calaza *et al.*, 2021). Traditional gender roles and stereotypes
13 continue to play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards women. For example, women
14 are often expected, by peers and family members, to prioritise family responsibilities over their
15 careers, which can limit their opportunities for professional progression. In addition, this social
16 expectation upon women taking primary roles in caregiving tasks - related to motherhood or
17 not - influences how they are treated professionally, often having negative effects on
18 opportunities offered to them. Historical patterns of discrimination and exclusion in Brazil
19 contribute to a distinct academic and scientific environment, where traditional power structures
20 and gender norms present additional hurdles for women (Areas et al., 2023). Black women in
21 in Brazilian academia often participate in fields with lower social prestige and fewer
22 opportunities in the labour market (Queiroz, 2008) but there is still reluctance within the
23 academic community to acknowledge racism's presence in Brazilian society (Dijk, 2008).
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33 The political context of Brazil is also crucial for effective EDI implementation, requiring
34 stability, supportive EDI structures, and continuous investment in education and research.
35 Historically, the Brazilian academic community has experienced limited funding availability,
36 which has worsened in recent years under a far-right government that did not prioritise
37 scientific education and research (Kowaltowski, 2021; Rodrigues, 2022). These funding cuts
38 represent a stark setback for Brazilian science, further impacting progress towards gender
39 equality (Hipólito *et al.*, 2022). While there is not a clearly defined EDI agenda in Brazilian
40 academia, there is a greater focus on gender with white women mainly driving and benefiting
41 from EDI efforts. However, there is a strong Black movement responsible for affirmative
42 actions and quotas that have increased the representation of Black students in universities
43 over the years, thus there is more push for racial and gender equality. There is a historical
44 trend whereby EDI initiatives are considered non-priority areas within institutions and an
45 additional expenditure rather than an investment, particularly during financial hardship. While
46 the recent election outcome seemed to relieve the Brazilian scientific community (Tollefson,
47 2022), rectifying the damages caused in recent years will not be easily achieved.
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EDI challenges in Brazilian academia

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3 Considering the political and cultural context of Brazilian academia, we reflect on the
4 internationalisation of an EDI certification such as the Athena Swan charter in the Brazilian
5 context, identifying common challenges and distinctive features in relation to the focus of the
6 framework and its implementation.
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10 11 *The focus of EDI efforts : gender or intersectionality?*

12 Taking into account the focus of the Athena Swan Charter in the UK on gender - especially
13 when it was first introduced - and the aim of the funding call on advancing gender equality, the
14 first draft of the framework in Brazil was unsurprisingly focused on gender. However, through
15 our UK-Brazil partnership project, it was realised that we could not address gender equality in
16 Brazil without raising issues of race, somewhat different compared to the UK context where
17 discussions around race provide 'discomfort' (Bhopal and Henderson, 2019; Ahmet, 2021).
18 Brazilian colleagues clearly expressed how gender and race were intermingled and entwined
19 if we are to address inequalities. Thus, when the framework was introduced as a gender
20 equality framework, we - amongst other partnerships representatives - highlighted the
21 importance of incorporating race/ethnicity as an integral dimension of the Brazilian framework.
22 The recommendation concerning race/ethnicity was particularly relevant, given the ongoing
23 affirmative action initiatives and racial quotas in the country (Heringer, 2015). The ten
24 principles of the framework are now thus explicitly referring to gender and race. However, it
25 there were recommendations to rename the framework to 'gender and race equality
26 framework' but this was not actioned. Compared to Brazil, and while affirmative (positive)
27 action measures are allowed in the UK, there is reluctance across stakeholders in engaging
28 with such activities across sectors including higher education (Archibong and Sharps, 2013).
29 UK HEIs are currently working on two different charters for gender (Athena Swan) and race
30 (REC) and despite the debate for having a single charter (Bhopal and Henderson, 2019) there
31 are still advocates on keeping them separate. Furthermore, CAS such as the REC have been
32 criticised in terms of being a symbolic, non-performative activity, prioritising whiteness'
33 privilege rather than challenging it (Ahmed, 2007) and making institutions comfortable - by not
34 discussing race explicitly, but instead diversity in a broad way - and Black and minority ethnic
35 people, uncomfortable (Ahmet, 2021). If Brazilian HEIs are to apply this framework, it would
36 be interesting to explore the extent to which a single CAS addressing both gender and race
37 might bring similar, different or even competing criticisms and challenges. Single focus CAS
38 such as the REC and Athena Swan emanating from the UK (a different context, part of the
39 Global North) might be less appropriate for contexts like Brazil where there seems to be
40 greater acknowledgement of racial disparities - evidenced by affirmative actions - and
41 potentially a more fertile ground for CAS to consider both sexism and racism intersectionally.
42 It should be noted that the recent adaptations of Athena Swan in Canada and America take a
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3 more intersectional perspective so it would be important to explore further the relationship
4 between context and focus of equality frameworks.
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6 Furthermore, we recommended motherhood/parenthood as important considerations
7 within the Brazilian framework which was integrated in subsequent iteration of the framework
8 within its guidelines on evaluating institutional culture. Parenthood and motherhood have been
9 key for our partnership since the Brazilian authors in this article are founders and/or key
10 members of the Parent in Science movement, a notable and longstanding initiative, introduced
11 in 2016, aimed at supporting researchers to reconcile academia with parenthood. This
12 movement has been gathering quantitative data on gender and parenthood dynamics within
13 the Brazilian scientific community serving as the cornerstone for developing proposals which
14 have been integrated into public policies HEIs across Brazil. Recognising the unique
15 motherhood challenges and their impact on careers of women in academia (Mello-Carpes et
16 al., 2022), it had to be explicitly included in the proposed framework. Similarly, considering the
17 neoliberal context of the UK, where academics are seen as ideal workers who are available
18 to perform 24-7, academic mothers cannot fulfil this ideal norm (Ollilainen, 2019) suffering
19 adverse consequences on their careers. The Athena Swan Charter and many UK HEIs have
20 undertaken various measures in addressing such challenges by considering their institutional
21 parenthood policies including return to work policies and introducing facilities and support
22 networks. In Brazil, some measures have been undertaken but they are often ad hoc and
23 limited to specific Brazilian institutions to address inequalities in relation to parenthood (e.g. a
24 "maternity clause" in guidelines for CV analysis, allowing for extended time periods or
25 correction factors to account for mothers' productivity; flexibility regarding the workload of
26 professors with caregiving responsibilities during the COVID-19 pandemic).

27 By incorporating race/ethnicity and motherhood considerations into the Brazilian
28 framework offers a more comprehensive approach and a better starting point to address key
29 needs of the Brazilian academic community. This is particularly important given that EDI efforts
30 have been limited to affirmative actions and ad hoc initiatives, as identified by our partnership
31 and other international UK-Brazil partnerships. For example, the adapted framework can draw
32 attention to parenthood policies which systematically consider the intersectional dynamics of
33 race/ethnicity and the presence of disabilities in children. For instance, Black, Indigenous, or
34 mothers with children with disabilities could be entitled to additional compensatory measures
35 within evaluation systems, such as receiving extra scoring when their scientific productivity is
36 assessed.
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58 *The implementation of EDI*
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3 During our collaboration, we had numerous discussions about the implementation of gender
4 equality and EDI efforts and often we found ourselves encompassing similar challenges and
5 commonalities despite our different contexts. Thus, we identified five key challenges (Figure
6 1). Reflecting on the UK experience of Athena Swan, the last three continue to create
7 roadblocks to gender and EDI implementation while the first two challenges were particularly
8 pertinent in the first years of Athena Swan. When Athena Swan was introduced, UK HEIs
9 devoted none or limited resources and while they had data systems, data collection was not
10 built with the Athena Swan in mind.
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17 INSERT Figure 1: **The EDI challenges in academia in Brazil.**
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21 *Lack of resources allocation:* The effective implementation of EDI programs requires
22 significant resources allocation, including funding, personnel, and infrastructure. Without
23 adequate resources and expertise in EDI and specifically in gender, programs might be poorly
24 implemented and/or have limited impact in bringing transformative institutional change
25 (Tzanakou et al. 2020). In considering a framework for Brazil, there is a need to critically reflect
26 on conditions underlying the global North's perspective of CAs, particularly regarding financial
27 engagement in EDI initiatives. Athena Swan has been adapted to many Anglophonic countries
28 such as Ireland, Australia, Canada and the USA where in some cases, there have been long
29 standing and sophisticated gender initiatives such as the ADVANCE programmes in the US
30 (Rosser et al. 2019) but also have different systems of institutional and financial autonomy
31 compared to the complex socio-economic landscape of Brazil. For example, in the UK, HEIs
32 have diversified income streams (government allocation, student fees, knowledge exchange
33 etc) and are highly autonomous where to allocate resources. On the contrary, Brazil has
34 limited sources of funding, primarily derived from state and federal government sources. In
35 addition, Brazil faces a considerable challenge due to the inadequate allocation of resources
36 to education and science and limited autonomy on managing institutional budgets. Thus,
37 implementing the Athena SWAN framework in Brazil requires financial commitment and
38 investment of Brazilian authorities and various academic stakeholders to EDI. Research
39 funding priorities and agendas in Brazil are dictated centrally by federal agencies and less by
40 state agencies (only incremental to the main budget allocation). There are also regional
41 financial and socio-economic disparities among states, which is translated to different financial
42 capacities of each state funding agency. Furthermore, science funding in Brazil has been
43 used through the previous governmental leaders as a political tool, subject to critical cuts
44 based on waves of ideological denial of science, for instance.
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58 As previously mentioned, funding scarcity for education and research in Brazil has
59 prevented HEIs in allocating resources towards EDI initiatives. At the same time, Brazilian
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3 HEIs struggle with staff resources which restricts the institutions' ability to design, implement,
4 and evaluate EDI programs. Moreover, the lack of robust infrastructure and support often
5 result in a lack of accountability, making it challenging to monitor EDI initiatives' progress and
6 impact.
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10 *Insufficient data and research:* The lack of data and evidence is a widespread problem
11 in Brazil, clearly exemplified by the delay in conducting the demographic Census by the last
12 government leader (Garcia, 2021). Thus, it affects the quality of decision-making processes in
13 public policies, including the ones directed to HEIs. The Higher Education Census, overseen
14 by the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP), an
15 organisation affiliated with the Ministry of Education, plays a pivotal role in shaping educational
16 policies and initiatives in Brazil. However, despite its significance, there remains a notable
17 absence of an EDI lens in the census. One glaring gap is the lack of data collection on parental
18 status, a key aspect of diversity and inclusion. In Brazilian HEIs, systems and protocols of
19 systematic data collection on diversity are either non-existing or at embryonic stage. This
20 scenario results in limited transparency and accountability regarding the diversity of academic
21 staff and students, and identifying areas where EDI initiatives are most urgent. Without data,
22 including comprehensive demographics, such as gender, race/ethnicity, parenthood status,
23 and disability, CAS cannot be operationalised since institutions do not have a baseline and
24 cannot make informed decisions about EDI and monitor progress over time. Without data, it
25 becomes difficult to develop tailored and contextualised policies and programs that are
26 sustainable, and effective in bringing meaningful change. To promote EDI in Brazilian
27 academia, institutions need to prioritise the collection and analysis of updated diversity data
28 in their workforce, and apply this information into the design, implementation, monitoring and
29 evaluation of their respective EDI initiatives.
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41 *Lack of commitment from institutions leaders:* Academic leaders and decision-makers
42 in Brazil are not aware of the importance of EDI initiatives, do not have the necessary
43 knowledge and skills - as has been observed in other countries (Cuthbert et al, 2023),- and
44 are not committed to EDI. Effective EDI programs require strong leadership and explicit
45 commitment from senior leadership and individuals across the organisation to ensure that EDI
46 programmes are effectively implemented and lead to transformative change. It is not
47 uncommon for HEIs to establish committees or task forces to address issues related to EDI.
48 However, the mere creation of such committees does not guarantee that meaningful change
49 will occur. These committees often lack the power or resources needed to effect real change,
50 and their efforts can be hampered by institutional resistance. Furthermore, even when
51 recommendations are made, they may not be implemented by the institution's leaders, or the
52 implementation may be superficial or short-lived. This scenario is aggravated by the lack of
53 gender diversity in leadership positions in higher education and science (Figure 2). For the
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3 first time in history, Brazil has a female ministry of science, technology and innovation in office.
4 Brazil has two federal funding agencies, the National Council for Scientific and Technological
5 Development - CNPq (which has never had a female president) and the Higher Education
6 Personnel Improvement Coordination - CAPES (which has had only five female presidents in
7 its 71-year history). Brazil also has 27 state funding agencies, where women represent only
8 7.4% of their presidents. Women are only 24.6% and 28.2% of the heads of federal and state
9 universities, respectively. This underrepresentation of women in top decision-making
10 positions, as elsewhere, hampers the ability to influence institutional policies and practices.
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17 INSERT Figure 2: **Women underrepresentation in leadership positions in Brazilian**
18 **higher education and science.**
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22 *Resistance to change:* EDI programs may face resistance from individuals or
23 organizations who are reluctant to accept change or who may feel threatened by the goals of
24 EDI initiatives. This can also include resistance from individuals with conservative
25 perspectives, which tend to disregard gender, race, and other dimensions of diversity. Sadly,
26 in Brazil, the widespread fallacy of racial democracy, which stands for the misperception that
27 in Brazil there was a kind of mild slavery and harmony between masters and slaves, as well
28 as a natural blending of races. It has influenced negatively both the public debate over
29 affirmative action and its implementation in higher education for a long time. This theory
30 contributed to the notion that there would be less racial prejudice in Brazil, hindering the
31 adoption of affirmative action policies (Lee, 2020). This also resonates with the UK experience
32 and perception that the UK is an egalitarian post-racial society (Arday, 2019; Gilroy, 2004) and
33 the emphasis on de-colonisation as non-performative activities.
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36 Furthermore, people in leadership positions, including women, still believe that meritocracy is
37 the path to academic excellence (Gomes Neto *et al.*, 2022). This is mostly a consequence of
38 the ingrained concept of meritocracy and productivity in academia internationally. This
39 perception assumes that everyone has equal opportunities and that the ideal candidate for a
40 given role or opportunity will rise to the top based on merit alone (Gonzalez Ramos, 2017;
41 Oliveira *et al.*, 2022). This overlooks the systemic barriers to achieve success that
42 underrepresented communities face, including income disparities and access to quality
43 education (Staniscuaski, 2023).
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46 *Implicit bias and gender stereotyping:* Bias and gender stereotypes are persistent
47 challenges in global academia, and the Brazilian one is not an exception. These biases shape
48 attitudes and behaviours towards individuals based on their gender, race, ethnicity, and other
49 forms of diversity, creating barriers to EDI initiatives. Bias against parents, particularly
50 mothers, has also been identified in academia (Staniscuaski *et al.*, 2023; Tsouroufli 2018;
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3 Crimmins et al. 2023), emphasising the importance of raising awareness and fostering a
4 progressive cultural transformation in how motherhood is viewed, especially in terms of
5 balancing parenting and professional responsibilities. To effectively address these challenges,
6 it is required from academic institutions in Brazil to, firstly, recognize the existence of these
7 biases and then to take proactive steps to alleviate them through evidence-based policies and
8 practices.
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12 Despite the commonalities, Brazil has a historical context of under-investment in higher
13 education and lack of efforts on gender and EDI in Brazilian academia which exacerbates
14 these challenges rendering endorsement and meaningful implementation of a CAS framework
15 quite problematic. Furthermore, Brazilian academia carries these structural characteristics
16 that can intensify the difficulties and challenges in advancing equality in academia such as (i)
17 a linear, monolithic academic pathway shaped around the ideal male academic - no options
18 for alternative career pathways – which requires access to an academic position in
19 government funded HEIs that are procured through highly standardised, metrics-driven public
20 tenders and demand high number of publications without opportunities for balancing teaching
21 with research, with insufficient opportunities for early career researchers to build their resume
22 and access tenured positions, (ii) funding for academic research provided only from
23 government agencies, in accordance to their scientific agenda with limited funding originating
24 in the private or industry sectors, (iii) regional inequalities between Brazilian states, as
25 reflected in the number of HEIs and funding available which contribute to the maintenance of
26 a centralised system that privileges only certain regions of the country. The imbalance and
27 associated inequalities between states and intra-regional are aggravated and maintained by
28 the persistent concentration of funds in a few institutions, as opposed to a wider national
29 distribution (Bortolozzi, 2004), (iv) limited support resources for academic staff, which
30 overload researchers of all levels with administrative work, internal political positions and
31 burdensome constant work towards funding access.
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Transforming Brazil into a CAS-compatible country

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49 In order to establish an EDI CAS or to start developing a comprehensive approach in mitigating
50 inequalities in Brazilian academia, we need to understand context and within that its priorities
51 and challenges in designing, implementing and evaluating efforts to make academia more
52 equitable and inclusive. The international partnerships call was a useful starting point towards
53 this direction through identifying key focus areas and challenges in implementation and
54 informing the introduced gender equality framework. However, this call only involved 20
55 Brazilian HEIs out of a vast higher education landscape of approximately 2,600 HEIs. A more
56 comprehensive, holistic effort is required to address a complex issue like EDI - in a systemic,
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3 structural and non-performative way - involving joint efforts from government, funders,
4 scientific academies, and societies, as well as the HEIs themselves (Figure 3). During our
5 partnership and since the introduction of the framework, we had repeatedly discussed the
6 significance of a concerted effort from all stakeholders in Brazilian academia to take
7 responsibility and towards the mitigation of academic inequalities. There is a lot to be done
8 but we have identified initial actions for each stakeholder (Figure 3).
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17 **INSERT Figure 3: Action plan to transform Brazil into a CAS-compatible country.**
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20 Governments should explicitly commit to addressing academic inequalities related to
21 gender and EDI through systematic efforts such as the framework introduced by the British
22 Council and Advance HE or consider different perspectives. Any systematic and meaningful
23 effort to gender and EDI requires allocation of governmental financial resources to underpin
24 the coordination of such frameworks across Brazilian HEIs. Providing and budgeting dedicated
25 resources to support EDI programs is crucial for effective implementation, evaluation, and
26 impactful transformative change within Brazilian academia. Funders, scientific academies,
27 and societies also play a vital role in contributing to holistic transformative change in the
28 Brazilian Higher Education sector. This involves reviewing their programmes, representation,
29 processes, and operations through a gender and EDI lens. Publishing data on funding
30 applications/success from an EDI perspective and providing funding for structural and cultural
31 changes to HEIs are crucial steps, aligning with successful models like the National Science
32 Foundation's ADVANCE funding in the United States (DeAro et al., 2019).
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41 Brazilian HEIs should initiate a gender/EDI audit, conducting a self-assessment of their
42 organisations to gauge inclusivity. This includes establishing systems for systematic EDI data
43 collection, and revisiting policies and practices through a gender and EDI lens, raising
44 awareness about structural inequalities in Brazilian academia. Ensuring commitment from
45 senior leadership and fostering a collective effort within the organisation to address gender
46 and EDI inequalities is essential. Additionally, organising communities of practice within Brazil
47 to engage consistently with frameworks and tailor them to the Brazilian context will contribute
48 to meaningful, dynamic and context-specific advancements in the academic landscape. The
49 Athena Swan Charter in the UK transitioned to a Transformed Athena Swan Charter in 2020
50 - similarly in Ireland in 2021 - showing the importance of CAS having a dynamic character
51 where certification frameworks can change to meet the needs of a constantly changing sector.
52 Finally and more importantly, all stakeholders need to work together to better understand the
53 current landscape of Brazilian academia, its systemic barriers and challenges and decide on
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3 key priorities and strategies. In this effort, they need to reflect critically on the extent to which
4 frameworks such as the adapted Athena Swan in Brazil fits their contextual needs and
5 priorities and to what extent this or another framework could be further tailored and
6 contextualised. The Athena Swan framework introduced in Brazil has already gone through
7 initial consultation from the partnerships project so it can be a useful starting point especially
8 considering the similarities identified in the implementation between the UK and Brazil.
9 However, when internationalising an existing CAS such as the Athena Swan in Brazil, it is
10 important to critically reflect on its 'feasibility and appropriateness' to the socio-cultural,
11 historical, and institutional nuances of Brazil but more importantly to approach these
12 international EDI schemes with a decolonial approach. In our collaboration and consultation
13 towards the framework development for Brazil, we centred the voices and perspectives of
14 Brazilian researchers and stakeholders, rather than imposing preconceived models or
15 frameworks from the UK, allowing us to engage in meaningful dialogue and co-creation,
16 ensuring that the charter reflected the unique context, challenges, and aspirations of the
17 Brazilian academic community. This work needs to continue since equality work is dynamic
18 and the framework should follow an iterative approach that allows refinement based on
19 implementation and evaluation. As Brazilian HEIs have started engaging with the framework,
20 a pilot implementation and a comprehensive evaluation is essential to assess the contribution,
21 relevance and applicability in the Brazilian landscape. This should be accompanied with
22 establishing a coordination mechanism or certification body to support the implementation of
23 the framework – such as organising (peer) review panels, providing relevant support and
24 resources - and monitor its impact.

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38 These conditions can help Brazil to pave the way for a more inclusive, more intersectional,
39 locally relevant CAS that resonates with its inner realities, fostering genuine EDI in academia.
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44 **Concluding discussion**

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46 Internationalisation in higher education has been often romanticised and positioned as positive
47 and virtuous, overlooking postcolonial and geographical hierarchies that perpetuate
48 inequalities between Global North and South. In this paper, we look at internationalisation from
49 a different lens exploring how gender equality and EDI certification can be internationalised in
50 the Global South and the role of international partnerships in this internationalisation process.
51 Reflecting on our UK-Brazil partnership we felt ambivalent towards the internationalisation of
52 the framework and the way it was operationalised exemplified in this section. Further research
53 is required to problematize 'internationalization' of EDI initiatives and Global North and South
54 partnerships. Bringing together interdisciplinary insights from EDI, gender and race studies,
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3 interculturality and de-colonial scholarship is essential in providing critical interrogations of
4 internationalization, globalization and neo-liberalisation of HE.
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7 In our problematisation of the 'internationalisation of EDI', the terms and conditions of
8 the funding scheme reproduced postcolonial legacies especially in terms of allocating the
9 funds to the UK partner only overlooking the historically under-resourced context of Brazilian
10 academia implicitly asking Brazilian partners to work for free in addition to their strained
11 academic workloads. During this partnership, Brazilian partners attended and engaged with
12 meetings/workshops of partnerships, attended meetings of the funder to feed they bore the
13 heavy burden of institutional work e.g. establishing committees, collecting data, raising
14 awareness of the framework thus contributing towards supporting an Athena Swan framework
15 for Brazil. The emphasis on mentoring and the leading UK partner implicitly introduced power
16 relationships based on colonial logic and geographical dichotomies of the Global North and
17 South, 'advanced-less advanced' partners. While UK HEIs have experience of gender equality
18 work and initiatives through Athena Swan it might have been more appropriate for the call to
19 having been framed around peer mentoring, coaching and knowledge exchange to nurture a
20 more inclusive and equitable environment. In our partnership we quickly acknowledged such
21 underlying assumptions, and we made efforts to rebalance the relationship developing a
22 contract and a programme of activity that was focused on collaborative decision making,
23 sharing and mutual learning. This helped both partners in openly discussing challenges and
24 frustrations, and working together collaboratively on how we could make our EDI efforts more
25 effective and meaningful within our institutions and beyond. The partnership thus provided the
26 space to develop a sense of global sisterhood which was nurtured by our common political
27 identities as feminists and through sharing common challenges and frustrations, despite our
28 different disciplinary background and institutional contexts.
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31 Focusing on how the framework was 'internationalised' and 'operationalised' in the
32 Brazilian context, again we appreciated that the funder opened the framework for consultation
33 to the partnerships and integrated comments regarding race and parenthood but there was
34 still reluctance and no action in relation to adding race to the title of the framework. While we
35 felt that the framework was a useful starting point to start discussions about systematic gender
36 and EDI efforts in Brazil, there was frustration about the limited scope within the project to
37 establish this more widely due to the limited resources mainly allocated to UK partners (30K
38 per project for a year), the small scale of the project (20 Brazilian HEIs out of a vast HE sector)
39 and the lack of engaging with stakeholders in the wider sector (government, funding agencies,
40 academic societies). The funding body also facilitated the translation of key documents and
41 the frameworks and there was translation during the consultation workshops in Portuguese
42 but the main language being used was English reinforcing the dominant position of English as
43 a global lingua franca (Gray et al. 2018).
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3 The notion that CAS are universally applicable requires critical examination, as the
4 dynamics of EDI are inherently shaped by cultural, historical, and institutional factors specific
5 to each country. Despite the global aspirations of CAS such as the Athena Swan and REC,
6 there is a need for contextualisation and nuanced adaptations to resonate with the Brazilian
7 reality. An uncritical application of existing CAS frameworks may inadvertently perpetuate
8 inequities or overlook crucial dimensions of diversity specific to Brazil. Two significant
9 modifications were incorporated into the initial version of the Brazilian adaptation of Athena
10 Swan in relation to the key focus and priorities of Brazilian academia shifting attention towards
11 gender in intersection with race and parenthood. Race and parenthood dimensions can also
12 be accounted for under the Transformed Athena Swan Charter through its intersectional
13 emphasis so one could argue that it is not that different. It makes us wonder if Athena Swan
14 in the UK was launched in the recent years of EDI global buzz, would it still have a predominant
15 gender focus? Or maybe an intersectional one? Through our partnership, we identified similar
16 challenges to EDI implementation making us think that maybe our contexts are not that
17 different. Or can it be that through our partnership we co-constructed and articulated those
18 challenges that we felt were common?
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28 Again, ambivalence emerges. While in both contexts we have been facing challenges
29 in relation to commitment from senior leaders, biases and stereotyping, resistance, limited
30 resources and inadequate data that makes us feel pessimistic about substantial change in
31 academia within our lifetime, we also feel hopeful there is some progress - even somewhat
32 limited - in the UK after having a CAS for almost twenty years. And we do not argue that the
33 Athena Swan or any other CAS is perfect or a panacea to addressing systemic inequalities.
34 For example, we have seen in the UK how existing CAS have been considered as symbolic
35 and non-performative with unintended consequences (Ahmed, 2007; Ahmet, 2021; Tzanakou
36 and Pearce, 2019; Tzanakou, 2019). They can also be seen as neoliberal and colonial
37 practices flourishing in the Global North, imposing a particular way of thinking around how
38 organisations should be addressing inequalities (Ibarra-Colado, 2006; Imas and Weston,
39 2012). On that note, one could ask: What does Athena Swan do in Brazil? Why is a funding
40 body promoting this? Is this internationalisation of Athena Swan another colonial project, a
41 project for the UK to impose its values, principles, and processes through a neoliberal, metrics
42 driven, non-performative way? Yes, it could be and it can be disappointing. After all, Audrey
43 Lorde has said (2018) 'The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house'. But our
44 ambivalent selves are asking: what is the alternative? Can the Athena Swan be used as a
45 starting point for more systematic efforts that could be galvanised for developing a collective,
46 radical and decolonial approach to addressing academic inequalities? We do hope for the
47 second aspiring towards a radical shift in the institutional mindset, acknowledging and actively
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3 addressing the deeply rooted issues hindering EDI promotion in Brazil and worldwide. But of
4 course, this remains to be seen.
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40 [1] The framework is available at: [https://www.britishcouncil.org.br/en/programmes/education/brazil-](https://www.britishcouncil.org.br/en/programmes/education/brazil-gender-equality-framework-higher-education-institutions)
41 [gender-equality-framework-higher-education-institutions](https://www.britishcouncil.org.br/en/programmes/education/brazil-gender-equality-framework-higher-education-institutions)

42 [2] See for more Tzanakou and Pearce, 2019 on the development of Athena Swan.
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Figure 1: The EDI challenges in academia in Brazil.

Notes: Main barriers include: lack of resources, insufficient data and research, lack of commitment and leadership, resistance to change, implicit biases and gender stereotyping. These factors create barriers to EDI and impede the implementation of effective and sustainable programs.

Brazilian Higher Education and Science Leadership

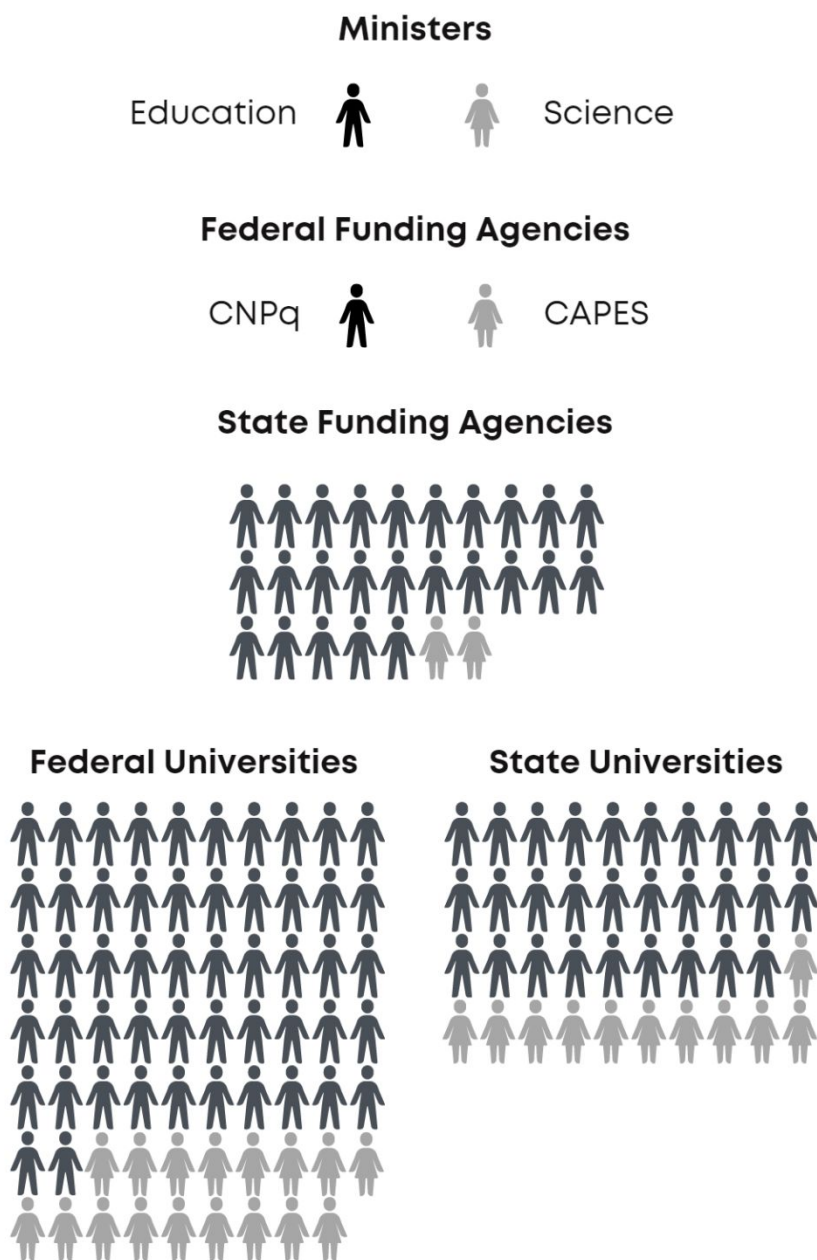


Figure 2: **Women underrepresentation in leadership positions in Brazilian higher education and science.**

Notes: For the first time in history, Brazil has a female ministry of science, technology and innovation. Brazil has two federal funding agencies, CNPq (that has never had a female president) and CAPES (that has had only five female presidents). Brazil also has 27 state funding agencies, where women represent only 7.4% of the presidents. Women are only 24.6% and 28.2% of the top heads of federal and state universities, respectively. Percentages were calculated based on the list of presidents

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of federal (CNPq and CAPES) and state funding agencies (available at <https://confap.org.br/pt/faps>), as well as rectors of federal (available at <https://www.andifes.org.br/>) and state universities (available at <https://www.abruem.org.br/>).

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

TRANSFORMING BRAZIL INTO A CAS-COMPATIBLE COUNTRY: AN ACTION PLAN

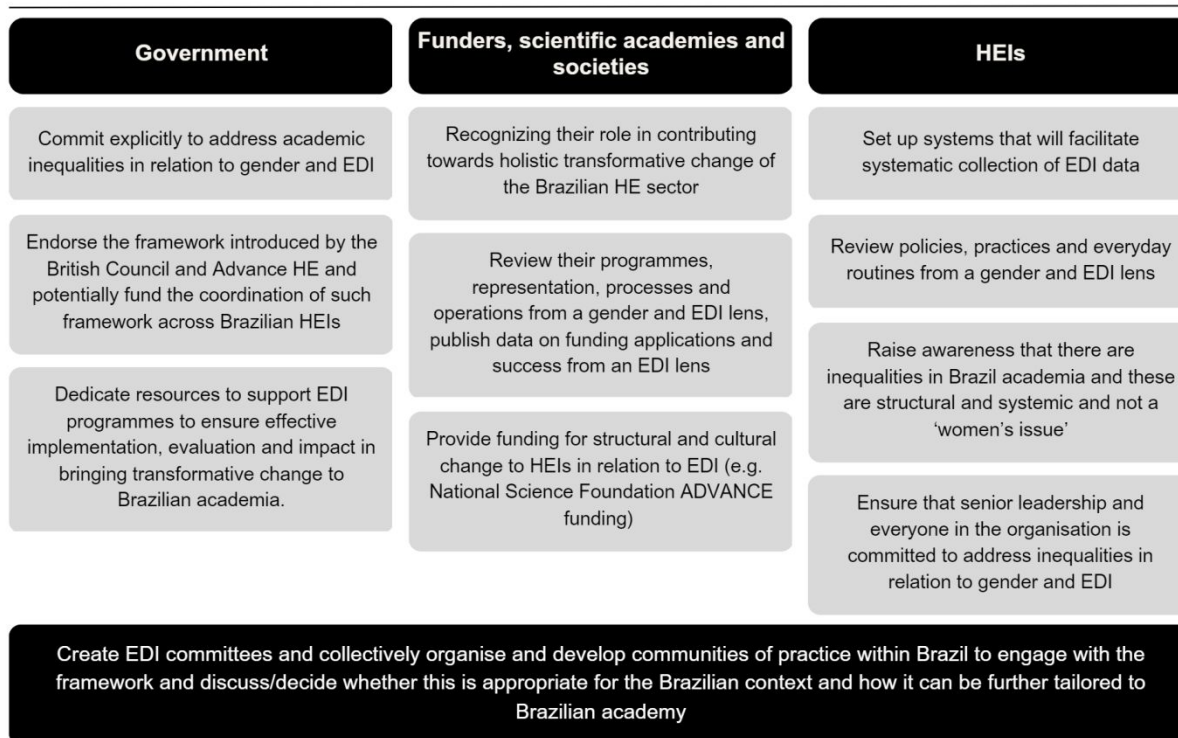


Figure 3: **Action plan to transform Brazil into a CAS-compatible country.** Brazil action plan to address academic inequalities related to gender and EDI, involving the three main players groups: government; funders, scientific academies, and societies; Brazilian HEIs.