Identity and Image of A Private University After Incorporation Process: Students' Perception

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Abstract:
Intense processes of mergers and acquisitions were noticed in the Brazilian context of Private Higher Education Institutions from the 2000s onwards. These manifestations triggered new conceptions and forms of management of these organizations and called into question the identity and image previously constructed with the actors in the process (Stakeholder) in the context of these institutions. What is perceived nowadays is a great race for competitive market advantages. This study analyzed the perception of students from 42 courses at a Private University that went through an incorporation process and was structured from the perspective of analyzing the Theory of Identity and Organizational Image. The results showed that the perceived impact in relation to identity and image was guided by two dimensions – the immediate and the one under reconstruction –, considering that the longitudinal research indicated differences between the initial moment of incorporation and the results obtained in the last phase of the research. These differences demonstrated conflicts in relation to identity and image at the initial moment of incorporation and, as strategic and institutional actions began to be implemented, it was possible to perceive new perspectives in relation to identity and image being constructed by the actors and their views on the organization.

Keywords: Identity. Image. Stakeholders. Strategy. Private Education Institution.

1. Introduction

Processes of mergers and incorporations in the field of Private Higher Education Institutions that occurred in Brazil from the mid-2000s have brought impacts on the academic, management and institutional dimensions, affecting the identities and images of these institutions. This study analyzes the perceptions felt by the students regarding the identity and organizational image in a process of corporate incorporation of a Private Higher Education Institution – PHEI.

The choice of the theme was guided by the objective of discovering how the students perceive the changes derived from this process of incorporation, considering that the institutions of higher education, mainly the universities, have constituted themselves historically and socially in a mimetic institutional environment, in which the internal constructions and Internal and external images are consolidated in the memory of the involved subjects.

As a theoretical base were used the theories of Identity, Social Identity, Image concepts and organizational identity, and the theories from stakeholders and from resources. The research was carried out with students from 42 courses of the HEI, belonging to all the academic periods of integralization from these courses.

As instruments of collection were used the application of the focal group technique, documentary analysis and a netnographic analysis. Data analysis was performed using the Content Analysis tool.

The verified results demonstrated that the impact on the identity and image after the incorporation process in the university occurred in two dimensions; The immediate and the reconstructive, bearing in mind that at the exact moment of incorporation, the perception of the students was very much related to the perceived identity of the organization "A" before the incorporation, and the extent to which strategic actions, management practices and operational practices were being implemented in the organization "AI" there are signs that a new identity and image are being built, since students already have identifications with the new reality proposed.

2. The Social and Cognitive Construction of Identity

In psychoanalysis, identity is formed through the process of identification, that is, in the formation and recognition of the individual's "self" in the course of the constitution of his personality. In this movement, the subject learns to understand the differences and similarities about himself in relation to other people and the environment of which he is a part (Lorentz, Lima, Dias, & Guimarães, 2014).

The system of identification produced by the individual takes place through structures, schemas, cognitive and social models that the individual appropriates and assumes as parts of his personality and, from then on, these aspects are revealed through their stated characteristics in their social attitudes and practices throughout the history they establish with other individuals and with the collective environment (Lima *et al.,* 2023).

Extending the understanding from this conception of identity to a historical and social view, it is conceived that identity is not formed only by individual internal factors internal, the external factors, such as cultural indicatives, are incorporated in these dimensions, once that the interlocutions of all these factors form the unique and singular character of identity (Cardoso, Hanashiro, & Barros, 2016).

Considering the studies of identity, besides its application in individual psychology, its use is found in the studies and definitions of plural, group entities, such as, for example, organizational studies, whose central focus is intended for this study, with the intention of understanding the relationship and the meanings built up in four categories: the individual, the group, the organization and the humanity (Vasconcelos, 2023).

According to Costa, Sousa and Capelle (2014), social identity is produced from the meanings attributed by individuals to themselves, because they consider themselves part of contexts, groups, history and, in the same proportion, recognize elementary external characteristics to the group.

3. Social Theory of Identity and Organizational Identity

Theorizations formulated to reflect the individual, collective and organizational dimensions of identity conception are found in Identity Theory, Social Identity, Self-categorization and Structural Theory (Hogg, 2016).Social Theory understands that reality is constructed in social relations, in the sharing of experiences and in explicit and implicit formulations present in interpersonal relations (Steets, 2016). In this same direction, the Theory of Social Identity (Slater, Evans, & Turner, 2016) and the Theory of Self-categorization point to the existence of a relational perspective of groups and between groups, which, together, produce a social identity (Chen, Chen, & Sheldon, 2016).

Costa (2020), considers identity a constant point of reference to the subjective reality that has a social dialectic nature, whose perennial character is identified in the social structures themselves and in the relations of individuals and groups.

In this sense, social reality is subsidized by groups of individuals that are recognized as belonging to social categories and, for this reason, share values, beliefs, conceptions and attitudes, identifying consensual characteristics of reality perception that they experience and associate (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). These categories, created by groupings of individuals, systematize the social structure and produce reference schemes that delimit the space and time of individuals and groups in society (Vasconcellos,2023).

The application of Identity Social Theory to organizations, as recommended by Tajfel and Turner (1979), analyzed by Slater *et al.* (2016), considers the relation of identities. According to Lorentz *et al.* (2014), at least three aspects of these identities must be considered in the process of analyzing the construction of identity in organizations, such as identification, projected identity and perceived identity.

The process of identification is understood as a process of perception and involuntary recognition performed by the individual from his or her organizational experience, that is, it is the incorporation of the other in itself. However, the projected identity is related to the projection of the unique characteristics of the organization, in order to construct a social image of its identity. On the other hand, the perceived identity is guided by the perception that the subjects share in a group sense regarding the organization (Silva, Vieira, & Silva, 2012).

In this way, identification is constructed based on the individual perception of each subject that, relating to the perceived identity, constitutes a shared group vision. These two constructs in a system of correlation form, then, the conceptual notes of what is understood as organizational identity (Costa. 2020).

The analysis of the concept of organizational identity is based on the idea that organizations and their groups belong to social systems, where each individual and groups produce a perception and understanding in a

system of symbolic and collective representation from how the organization becomes unique and specific in the minds of its members (Mourão *et al.*, 2014).

For Leitch and Harrison (2016), organizational identity comprises a collective of beliefs and values shared by individuals in a given organizational culture, reflected through symbolic processes. These authors defined that the identity of an organization is built on the relation of three fundamental characteristics, which they called central, distinctive and lasting (Perez, 2017).

Thus, the central character for these authors refers to what they consider as the essence and definition of the organization. However, the distinctive feature is conceived taking into consideration the factors that make the organization unique and distinguish it, they understand the aspects that differentiate it from the other organizations. Regarding the durable element, it understands in the continuity relation of these unique formulations present in the organization over time (Whetten, 2006).

Considering identity studies in the Social Theory and the concept formulated by Albert and Whetten (2004), it is directed to the reflection that the organization also formulates the identification process with its diverse stakeholders, with its environment and culture, which ends up constructing what is understood by the corporate image of the organization, where the organizational image comprises the internal formulations, and the corporate image external to the organization. The corporate image becomes a reflection, a communication of organizational identity (Steets, 2016).

4. Image, Meaning and Symbolic Systems

The Image is a word derived from Latin, whose meaning is related to the cognitive and psychological understandings of the individual in relation to the sensations experienced by their senses. It can mean resemblance, sensitivity and representation.According to Barros and Matos (2015), the understanding of the image has its origin in the investigations on the form in the field of Gestalt, in the studies on the perception, signs and production of mental images.

In cognitive psychology, images consist of knowledge mental representations, a meaning constructed from experiences experienced by individuals in the reality outside the mind, relating sensed and perceived objects, ideas, and events (Ravasi, 2014).

Most of the studies on image, in this context, emphasize symbolic representations related to the visual images perceived by the individuals (Costa et al., 2023). In radical research, images consist of copies that the mind stores of perceived physical objects. However, subsequent studies in this field have brought an expanded view, conceiving that the human mind makes use of reference systems to produce images. Thus, images can represent data, knowledge and physical and fanciful representations (Lima et al., 2024).

In organizational studies in which cognitive studies are used to explain organizational reality, such as in Organizational Psychology, for example, there are researches that aim to explain the presence of these phenomena through language, communication, organizational and corporate image (Leitch & Harrison, 2016).

In business communication, research on image is related to corporate image, customer satisfaction and understanding of the perception of direct audiences of organizations. Ruão et al. (2014) indicate that the public conception comprises the individuals and groups that have direct interests with the company.

In this sense, we also find the behavioral, environmental and postmodernist theories of the Administration, since these theories try to reveal the external scenario that influences the organizations, and it is in this context that the questions about the image, organizational reputation, are in the field of organizational analysis (Thomas e De Freitas, 2020).

By broadening these events a little more by conceiving the hypercompetitive market environment, the investigations in the field of strategy, especially the analyzes of organizational positioning, consider the development of corporate communication to be relevant, since in the hostile environment an eternal quest for efficient strategies internal and external communication, in order to build customer loyalty and build differentiation in relation to competitors (Bandeira et al., 2015).

5. Organizational Image and Corporate Image

The image is a product of the individuals representation about the image projected by the company, the developed behavior, the thinking and the organizational memory. It is a way of understanding organizations,

their social and collective construction. It is defined from how it is seen, understood and projected to the individuals who are part of it and in the public mind (Slater *et al.,* 2016).

The images are produced, represented and shared by the members of the organizational culture (Costa *et al*., 2020). The internal image of an organization reveals its self-image, that is, how the organization perceives itself, communicated through its identity, which is defined by its strategic conception, politics, culture and organizational climate (Cardoso, Polidoro, 2016).

For Leitch and Harrison (2016), these internal projections corroborate the construction of the organizational image, since they tend to emphasize the key attributes of organizational identity, influencing perceptions, behaviors, in view of the values, conceptions and beliefs formulated in the environment. Its formulation results from the correlation of several factors. They bring together characteristics, understandings and perceptions that stakeholders attribute to the organization. The way in which individuals perceive the general attributes designed by the organization comprises the organizational image and the corporate image (Chen *et al.,* 2016).

On the other hand, the intentional image of the organization is the corporate identity projected, oriented by the organizational objective, by the conception that it intends to communize with its stakeholders. It is composed of several intentional factors, such as behaviors, attributes, differentiation strategies and associations of concepts, products and services (Martinuzzo, 2014).

In this context, it can be conceived that the organizational image is the identity transmitted by the high management and the identity perceived by the diverse actors that integrate the organizational environment; corporate image is the corporate identity projection, since it constitutes a managed action, having as presuppositions the strategic, intentional and planned proposals of the organization (Pimentel e Behling,2024)

With regard to the corporate image, it is understood as a useful and convenient way of prospecting ideas and individuals impressions about the organization. It is the design built in the minds of customers, public, through brand advertising, service, packaging, in order to produce commercial value to the organization. In theory, these components aim at the organizational products projection, through marketing strategies, construct opinions and meanings in relation to the organization (Bandeira *et al*., 2015).

In this way, it is understandable that the meanings constructed and projected in the internal and external environments from the organization occur in conflicting and dichotomous dimensions, since they comprise negotiation spaces between institutional interests, managers, employees and their diverse stakeholders, both primary and secondary.

6. The Identity and Image of Private Higher Education Institutions

Taking as a starting point the changes occurred in the legislation of higher education after the Federal Constitution of 1988 and the promulgation of the Law of Guidelines and Bases and, mainly, by the set of policies printed in the reform of the State apparatus around the years of 1990, especially by LDB - Law no. (Brazil, 1996), which modified the culture, structure and organization from education in Brazil in a large scale (Mainardes, 2017), it appears that in this set of initial reforms of 1990, the identity and image of private higher education institutions are built in close proximity to that practiced in public institutions, in view of the legal framework established for both institutional natures (Corbucci *et al*., 2016). Thus, the reforms implemented since 1990 have brought a new orientation to higher education, when the homogeneity scenario is replaced by a highly heterogeneous environment, in view of the beginning of the PHEI expansion processes in many states and cities in the country (Lima *et al*, 2023).

However, the major expansion took place in 2007, through mergers, acquisitions and incorporations, taking into account the performance of relevant educational groups, including the use of foreign investors and capital (Calegari, 2016). Commercial and marketing practices have become daily for these institutions that have taken control of large amounts of PHEI throughout the country. Gains by scale and quantity sometimes become of paramount importance to leverage their capital offerings.

At this juncture, changes in the scenario of private higher education institutions provoke the emergence of new concepts and conceptions in relation to the purpose of these institutions and the own process of education to be adopted, when the identity of these institutions begins to be shaped. Many of these new

concepts and practices call into question strategic management procedures and teaching practice in the teaching-learning process (Mainardes, 2017).

Education, understood as a social right, is also driven by the logic of the market and causes the PHEI to foster transformations in its conceptions, strategies, structures and in the way of conceiving its target audience, thereafter, it is hypercompetitive (Pimentel e Behling,2024). In this way, these institutions assume a new role and, in the same way, begin to formulate a new identity, based on this new institutional scenario and on the objective of meeting the new environmental demands.

7 Materials and Methods

This research is centered on the assumptions of the qualitative approach to organizational studies, a theoretical view that is based on the need to investigate the exploratory and phenomenological field of reality, based on the interpretation and attribution of meanings.

It is characterized as exploratory because it considers an approach, through bibliographic research and interviews, with the individuals involved and who have practical experience with the questions listed in the research.

Regarding the scope of the research, a cross-sectional cut was carried out to represent a specific moment of the phenomenon studied, with longitudinal aspects, with the objective of monitoring the changes that have occurred in the context of the research problem (Farias Filho; Arruda Filho, 2013).

In order to understand the theoretical basis supporting the research, we started with a preliminary survey of texts in the journal databases of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), Science Direct and EBSCOhost Research Database, which are national and international reference databases.

The text selection procedure is directly linked to seminal works on changes in the institutional context of HEIs in Brazil, organizational identity and image, Resource Theory and Stakeholder Theory, observing the analysis and evolution of approaches in the context of national and international scientific production.

The data sources were primary and secondary. Document analysis, focus groups and Netnography were used as research instruments.

8 Results

This research has a qualitative and exploratory nature, with a cross section, and weighted some longitudinal aspects. It considered as a field of analysis an PHEI that underwent a recent process of corporate incorporation, in which strategic, management and institutional changes were perceptible, impacting its identity and image.The subjects of analysis were selected students from the first to the last period from the courses, representing 10% of the total number of students that the PHEI had at the time of the research, where the aspects that interfered in the construction and reconstruction of the individual and collective identity were verified, such as stories, social relations and the temporality of the individual's relationship with the organization and the images produced and projected in the process.

The data were collected through the application of two focus groups, the analysis of a social network page formed by the students, as well as through documentary analysis. Content analysis was used as a technique in order to verify the manifestations felt by the subjects in relation to the object of the research.

At the moment of analysis, considering the diversity of data found and the number of sources observed, a frequency distribution was initially performed, in which the data were related to the two central categories of research, identity and image, as well as to the secondary categories, based on the identity-building aspects contant in the organizational identity studies as central, distinctive and enduring characteristics, as well as the three categories of identity discussed in the studies of Social Identity Theory, which are the process of identification, projected identity and perceived identity. Regarding the image category, the aspects related to the concepts of organizational image and corporate image were analyzed, in order to identify the impacts generated by the development of the changes in the management, in the considered time span.

During the analysis, parameterization and discussion of the data, the organizations surveyed were named organization "A", "B" and "AI", organization "A" being the incorporated company and the so-called "AI" organization restructured after the change.

8.1 Characterization of The Case in Study

Organization "A" was created in 1987 as a strategic result from the union of two educational institutions from the region of its location, at the time considered as references in the field of its activities. Initially, this organization was managed as an isolated PHEI, acting only in few areas of knowledge, and it was only in 1993 that it was transformed into a university, expanding its activity to several areas of knowledge, concomitant with the legal and political changes that were taking place in the Brazilian scenario.

Since its foundation, the "A" organization has been structured in the same way as the university mimetic model, in which its forms of management were in conformity with those practiced in public universities, from the design of the physical structure, through the organizational structure, academic policies and management. When it became a university, it adopted, isomorphically, the model of Brazilian university, with undissociated teaching, research and extension.
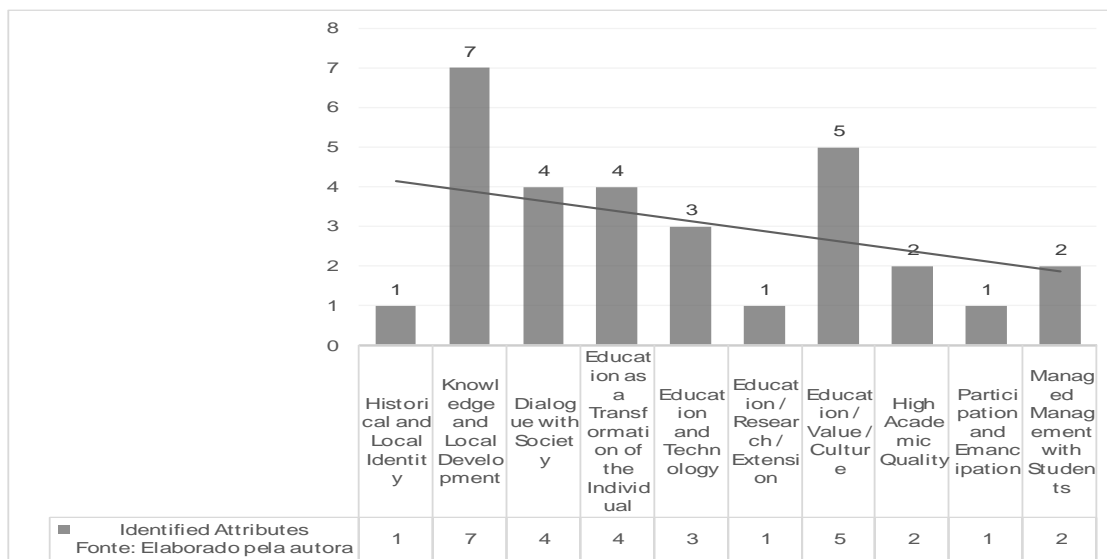
With regard to organization "B", was founded in 1994, the result of business operations of a teacher and entrepreneur. Initially it was structured as a preparatory course for public tenders, and soon expanded its area of operation for the management of institutions of basic education and institutions of higher education. In mid-2009, it began to expand its activities through the control acquisition of several insular institutions of higher education in various regions of the country, reaching 152,000 and 38 units acquired by 2016, being recognized for the maintenance of quality HEI, according to the INEP evaluation instruments, reaching a position among the 10 largest educational groups in the country.

In the year 2013 the Initial Public Offering (IPO) was realized, becoming part of the list of public companies, with strategies of governance and with foreign investments. As a strategy, from that moment on, it expanded its activities to a state-of-the-art business model, when it began to acquire university institutions of tradition and regional reference, covering its activities in the Northeast, North, Central, South and Southeastern regions of Brazil.

The incorporation procedure took place during the years 2014 and 2015, when the transition process began and the corporate reform plan, which would result in strategic, management and operational changes. The reform plan consisted of expanding courses and vacancies, implementing quality management policies and controlling by means of competitive intelligence systems, which was not part of the installed organizational culture. The first change was set in a broad reform in the physical structure of organization "A", with the intention of modernizing classroom equipment, library, laboratories and expanding the number of classrooms. At the same time a plan of political and sectoral reforms was initiated with the objective of applying the matrix structure in the departments. An online relationship system was then implemented with the student and the offerings of government and institutional financing programs were expanded.

In this sense, constant growth strategies in the reform plan resulted in a 60% increase in the number of students in 2015. However, the crisis in the federal government came to impact the new actions of the organization "The incorporated" and the non-acceptance of the new policies by employees, students and teachers also triggered a drop of 20%, which came to normalize only in 2016, when new growth was observed, with a view to a new enrollment of students.

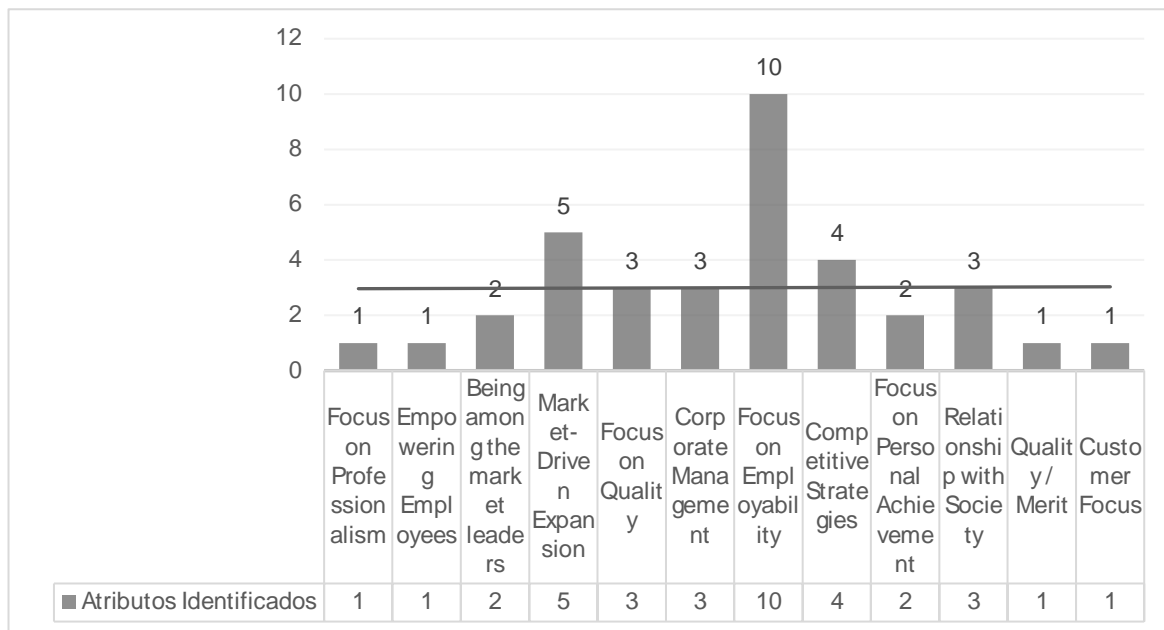**Graph 1 - Attributes evidenced in the Identity of Organization "A"**

	Histori cal and Local Identit y	Knowl edge and Local Develo pment	Dialog ue with Societ y	Educat ion as a Transf ormati on of the Individ ual	Educat ion and Techn ology	Educat ion / Resear ch / Extensi on	Educat ion / Value / Cultur e	High Acade mic Quality	Partici pation and Emanc ipation	Manag ed Manag ement with Studen ts
Identified Attributes	1	7	4	4	3	1	5	2	1	2

Fonte: Elaborado pela autora

This analysis phase considered the categories of identity, recommended by the Social Theory, where it was identified that the projected identity of the organization "A" was related to the most frequently observed points through inference and content analysis.

For the organization "A", these attributes were evidenced according to the points listed in Chart 1, for the aspects of Education related to local development, value, culture, in the dialogical establishment with the society and promoting the transformation of the individual. The "B" documentary analysis showed that the key attributes were related to the focus on employability, market-oriented expansion, and the use of competitive strategies with the objective of reaching their corporate conceptions and goals, as demonstrated by Chart 2.

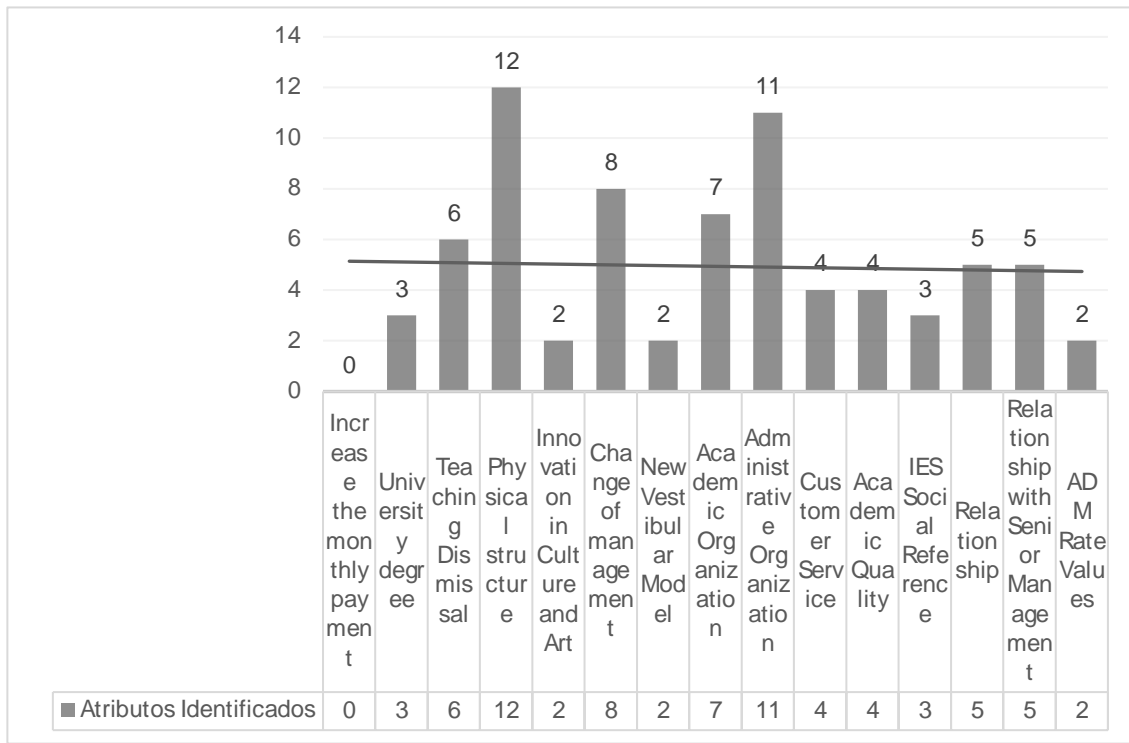**Graph 2 - Attributes evidenced in the Identity of Organization "B"**

	Focus on Professionalism	Empowering Employees	Being among the market leaders	Market-Driven Expansion	Focus on Quality	Corporate Management	Focus on Employability	Competitive Strategies	Focus on Personal Achievement	Relationship with Society	Quality/Merit	Customer Focus
■ Atributos Identificados	1	1	2	5	3	3	10	4	2	3	1	1

8.1 The Vision of Students on The Merging Process

For the students researched, the incorporation process impacted the conception elaborated before the incorporation process from the organization "A" in the course of shared experiences in the installed organizational culture. Thus, broadly, in the first focus group, applied exactly in the context of the first changes related to organizational incorporation, the students presented negative perceptions and, in general, attributed a resistant and discredited behavior towards the "B" organization.

Understanding the concepts belonging to the attributes of organizational identity and image, it was found that the key attributes most impacted in the students' manifestations were related to the physical structure, administrative organization, teaching resignation and academic organization and, in most of the points listed by the interviewees, it was pointed out that the change of management was understood as a negative question based on the identity and identification that the subjects possessed in relation to the previous historical reality (GRAPH 3).

Graph 3 - Changes that impacted student perceptions 2015

	Increase the monthly payment	University degree	Teaching Dismissal	Physical structure	Innovation in Culture and Art	Change of management	New Vestibular Model	Academic Organization	Administrative Organization	Customer Service	Academic Quality	IES Social Reference	Relationship	Relationship with Senior Management	ADM Rate Values
Atributos Identificados	0	3	6	12	2	8	2	7	11	4	4	3	5	5	2

Source: Prepared by the authors.

As regards the analysis applied to the contents collected in conducting the focus group 2, it was possible to verify the identity related features designed both the organization "A" as "B" organization. These data, unlike identified in the focus group content first, there was the perception of positive and negative aspects of students related to the merger process, which were classified as strengths and areas for improvement, as presented in Figure 4.

Graph 4 - changes that impacted the students' perception 2016

Points to Improve
weaknesses points
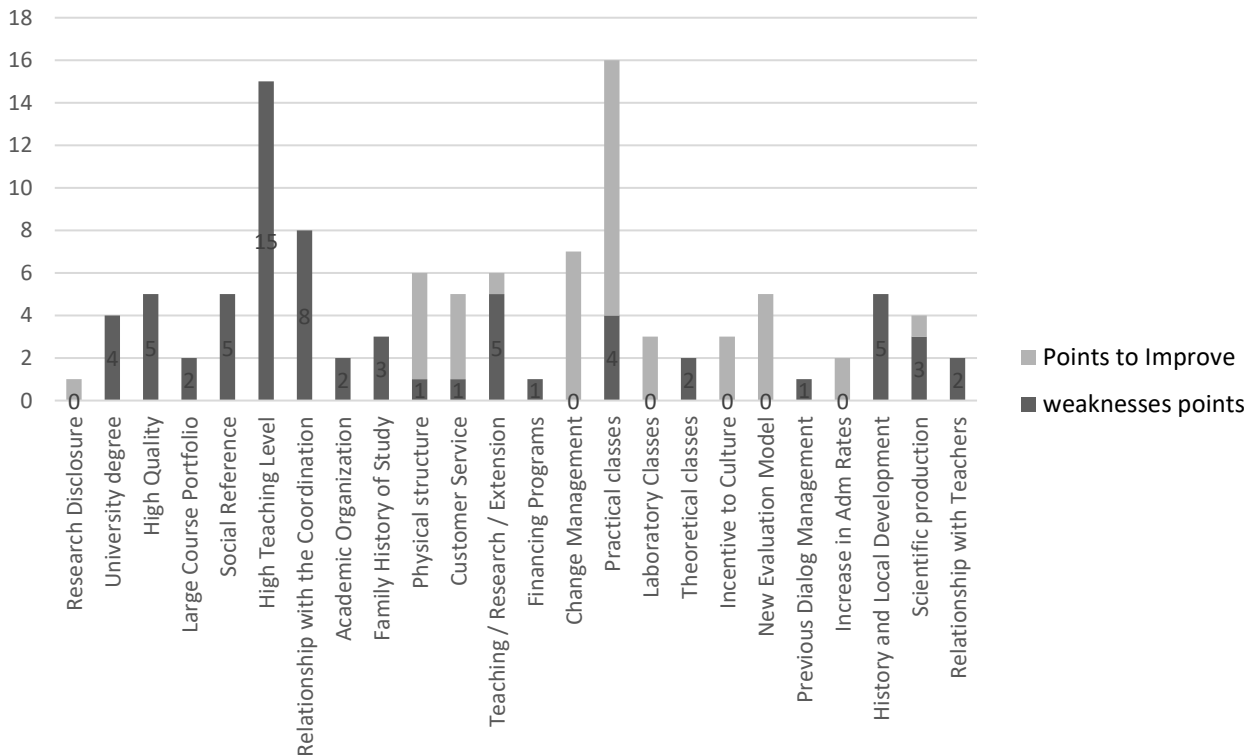
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Thus, the most frequently attributes this stage of the research were listed as the high level teaching, practical classes, the relationship of coordination to the students, the physical structure and the process of care to the student.

The overall strengths were listed as the high quality of teaching level, relationship with course coordination, the existence of the university degree, the image of a social reference institution and local quality.

The points to be improved in the students' perceptions were related to the physical structure, the student service, the practical laboratory classes, the lack of incentive to the culture, the low dissemination of the research activities and the new evaluation model established at measures adopted.

8.2 Results of Image Categories

This analysis phase was guided by the understanding that the image is an identity projection formed in the cognition of individuals, through its perception and its mental structural schemes built. It was understood that the organizational image is formed from the intersection between the projected identity, perceived identity and the identification processes elaborated by the subjects.

Thus, the corporate image is of strategic rationale, which is understood as a projection produced based on the management of identity designed to communicate the corporate identity of the organization.

In the aspects related as key attributes by the "A" organization perceived by the students and in the attributes identified by their projected identity it was verified that organization "A" projected its organizational identity based on strategic resources, in order to consolidate a local, regional identity , focused on the dialogical relationship and close to its stakeholders, without revealing a distinctive and market behavior (GRAPH 5).

Graph 5 - Design and institutional practice based on creating organizational identity of the Organization "A"
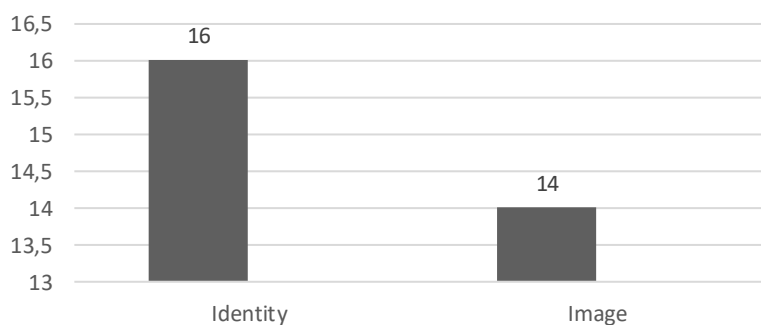
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the organization "B", related aspects were identified as key attributes, both perceived by the students and the attributes identified by their projected identity, that organization "B" projected its organizational identity based on strategic resources, in order to to consolidate a distinctive image with its competitors (CHART 6).

Graph 6 - Institutional design and practice based on the creation of corporate identity and image, organization "B"
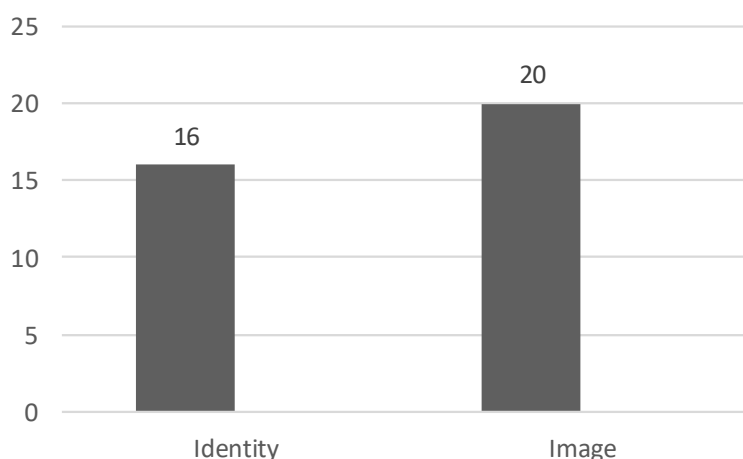
Source: Prepared by the authors.

From this perspective, it was identified that the strategic practices developed by the organizations researched in the incorporation process were based on different strategic behaviors. A relationship with the very period of constitution of the HEI: organization "A" wanted to be on the same level as the public; the organization "B" had the objective to show its differentiation not only to the previous one, but to the other HEIs.

The results pointed out about the projected identity and the perceived identity have developed the understanding that it is necessary to establish a consolidated relationship with the stakeholders in order to achieve relevant results regarding the strategies of the organizations.

In all, during the investigation phase, it was clearly perceived that the incorporation process involved design, strategic, management and operational changes, in view of the organization "A" in the time period analyzed.

However, in the final stage of the research, a different view was by verified the students, taking into account que They already Understood positive and not only negative issues related to the incorporation process, the identified in the stage of realization of focus group 1., the students' resistance to some of the proposals presented by the organization "B" for the management of the "A" organization was still perceptible, which intensifies the need for the new PHEI to build a solid and lasting relationship with the stakeholders, since they are defined as the elements impacted in direct relation by the actions and organizational decisions, in which their behaviors against the strategic practices have direct impacts on the organizational management and the future projection.

9 Conclusion

This research aimed to understand how the changes made in a private university, after applying a process of corporate incorporation, in which academic, institutional and strategic management changes were practiced, impacted the identity and image of the incorporated organization, according to students' views.

It is concluded that the merger scenario and acquisitions elapsed since mid-2007 represented, in effect, a significant change in culture, politics and the strategic and organizational conceptions identified in view of the concentration of private education, through business practice great educational groups across the country, among which considered the action of public companies and even foreign investors, as identified in the case in question.

In the study, the impacts on the identity and the image constructed over the years by the acquired HEIs were evident and this implied in reactions on the part of the subjects involved. In this way, the impacts created by the changes imputed to the private HEI researched, due to the implementation of assertive models of strategic management, transformed the relation established with the students. These, in turn, had their perceptions impacted on their processes of identity construction and image formation, since the

incorporation process studied modified the image communicated by the organization with all its stakeholders.

Throughout the application of the study, it became clear that the identity is due to a socially constructed process, which considers shared practices. Aspects interact and intercept in culture and image is the result of the individual's perception, a symbolic production elaborated and intermediated by the reference systems between the internal and external means in the formation process of the cognitive schemas from the individuals, where the identities and images are elaborated and formulated, in view of their experiences and learning.

The results verified that the impact on the identity and image after the process of incorporation of the university scenario took place under two dimensions, the immediate one and the one in reconstruction, since, at the exact moment of the incorporation, the students' perception was given priority in relation as evidenced in the projected and perceived identity of organization "A" prior to incorporation, and to the extent to which strategic actions, management and operational practices were being performed in the incorporated organization, showed signs that a new identity and image is being elaborated , since the students already evidenced, also, identifications with the new presented reality.

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