



THE IMPACTS OF THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ON THE TRAJECTORY OF STUDENTS: A STUDY AT THE FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY OF CEARÁ¹

Francisca Rejane Bezerra Andrade*

Tereza Nair de Paula Pachêco**

*PhD in Education from the University of São Paulo (USP). Post-doctoral fellowship in Educational Sciences, J. W. Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main. Professor of the Postgraduate Program in Education and the Postgraduate Program in Public Policy at the State University of Ceará (UECE). Tutor of the Tutorial Education Program (PET) of the Social Service course of the UECE. Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. E-mail: rejane.bezerra@uece.br

** Master in Leisure Studies by the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Specialist in Social Legislation and Public Policies: Parameters for the Work of the Social Worker by the Ratio College. Graduated in Social Service from UECE and in Sports and Leisure Management from the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Ceará (IFCE). Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil. E-mail: terezappacheco@hotmail.com

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Abstract

This article presents the impacts of Student Assistance Programs for the university trajectory of students from the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Ceará (IFCE), in Canindé/Ceará campus. The interlocutors of this research consider pertinent that the Program offers financial aid to support the expenses of students' lives, so they can conclude the higher education course. It was showed, especially, that this assistance contributes to improving the students' performance and academic training.

Keywords: Student aid. Higher education. Youths.

1. Introduction

In contemporary Brazilian society, the arduous living conditions that affect a sizeable part of Brazilians have intensified, given the socio-political scenario, by which the fragmentation of social rights predominates. In this context, young people experience, in an intense way, the fragility of such rights.

In this society, being young is challenging and involves several issues, considering, for example, the socioeconomic, cultural, national, regional, local, religious, ethnic and gender aspects, among others, which set up interfaces with the youth segment.

This way the complexities that involve Brazilian youth have a conspicuous precocious and precarious entry into a labor

market that is linked to structural unemployment; in addition, by the unreachable access to cultural means, which launches young people both as protagonists and victims of violence; and, with regard to education, specifically higher education, this question arises out of the difficulty that exists in the access and permanence of young people from the poorest social classes.

The specificity and relevance of this theme in the context of youths happens because of the growing expansion, in recent years, in the number of higher-level vacancies, which young people have appropriated exponentially. In the matter shown, the expansion is striking of the number of students belonging to the working class, which now has access to higher education at the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology (FIs).

Based on Rosa (2014), it is understood that the Brazilian society is marked by an increasingly latent socioeconomic inequality, which consequently impacts the access to certain goods and rights, among which the necessary goods for the continuation of these students in higher education stand out.

Therefore, the theme “permanence” of students in public universities deals with the search for guaranteeing the democratization of access to higher education, since it aims to collaborate with the incorporation, at this level of education, of those located in unfavorable socioeconomic conditions and holders of distinct educational backgrounds.

The Brazilian society is marked by an increasingly latent socioeconomic inequality

However, for the permanence of students from lower/underprivileged socioeconomic strata to occur, the existence of a set of articulated actions becomes crucial. In this conjecture, the Student Assistance Policy has proven to be, over time, a way of helping these students in the completion of higher education.

Notably, the effectiveness of the Student Assistance Policy is an important instrument for the realization of the right to public education, free of charge and of quality, since the democratization of access, alone, fails to meet the needs of a universe of students who suffer the consequences of social inequality present in society.

In this projection, the objective of this article is to present the impacts of the Student Assistance Program for the construction of the university trajectory of the students in the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Ceará (IFCE) - Canindé/Ceará *campus*.

2. Methodological path

The methodological path developed for the realization of the study treaded the following steps: initially, during the realization of bi-weekly study groups, debates and readings were held on the theoretical categories: student assistance, higher education, and the right to education.

It should be noted that the research financed by CNPq was conducted in the IFCE campuses of Aracati, Canindé, Crateús, Fortaleza and Maracanaú. The choice of the Canindé campus for this article was random, since the researchers of the Group of Studies and Research on Public Policies and Social Exclusion (Geppes) were selected to develop the research in the Federal Institutes mentioned above.

Regarding data collection at the IFCE Canindé/Ceará *campus*, the field research was guided by means of institutional visits, privileging individual and collective interviews with the basic multidisciplinary team that acts in student assistance, composed, in the case of the research in question, by social workers, psychologists and pedagogues.

From the latter, a focus group² was performed with 12 students³ from the IFCE Canindé campus, whose information collected is clear in this research⁴. At the first moment of the research, seven questions were arranged, drawn freely on the theme, so that, voluntarily, some of the students could read them for collective debate. In the second moment, three assertions were made, of which the students had to agree or disagree with what was being pronounced, manifesting so, the point of view on the matter.

The focus group held at the IFCE Canindé campus counted on the participation of students from the Degree courses in Physical Education, Mathematics licensing, Tourism Management Technology, and Computer Network Technology, from distinct shifts and semesters.

Regarding the universe of research interlocutors, all were higher education students at the IFCE - *Campus* Canindé and all were provided with financial student aid during the years 2014 to 2017. This research, in its format, addressed only three aids provided by FI students: transport, housing, and food, since the public surveyed was contemplated with at least one of the above-mentioned aids.

In the case of the Canindé *campus*, two aids are offered periodically: transportation and housing, and there are also other specific aids, such as: glasses aid, academic aid, and technical visits. As for food, it is offered free of charge in the form of school meals to all students from the technical, technological, special licensing and bachelor's degrees.

3. From access to the permanence of the students at the higher educational level

As Rosa (2014) points out, the 1988 Constitution of the Magna Carta establishes the Democratic Rule of Law, with the objective of promoting the principle of equality, unfolding through the consolidation of social rights, as well as the universalization of a set of services that must be provided to all components of society, seeking the democratization of social benefits.

In particular, the Federal Constitution (BRASIL, 2016) also highlights education as a right to all and a duty from the State and the family (Art. 205). The same document, in its article 206, items I and IV, suggests the principles of education, evidencing them in the context of equal conditions for access to and permanence in school, as well as free public education in official establishments. Thus, proclaiming education as a social right implies recognizing it as a target of social policies.

However, education, from the perspective of law, is not widely effective in the context of higher education, since the retention and dropout rates during graduation are still recurrent, especially to those students who are in a situation of social vulnerability, being also those who have difficulties in continuing their training processes.

Faced with this scenario, several movements were carried out in order to reduce dropout and support the permanence of students in higher education institutions. Regarding the right to education and its effectiveness, this appears shrouded in the aspect access, permanence and success in the formative process, which institutes the Normative Ordinance n. 39, on December 12th, 2007 and, later, the Decree n. 7.234, of July 19th, 2010 (BRASIL, 2010), that deal with the National Program of Student Assistance (PNAES).

Aligned with the PNAES objectives, in its Art. 2, some elements pertinent to the approached subject were detected, such as: to democratize the conditions of permanence for the young people in the federal public higher education; to minimize the effects of the social and regional inequalities in the permanence and conclusion of the higher educational level; to reduce the rates of retention and evasion; and to contribute in promoting social inclusion for education.

In addition, it is emphasized that § 1st of Art. 3rd of the PNAES presents the following areas in the context of student assistance: student housing; food; transportation; health care; digital inclusion; culture; sports; daycare; pedagogical support; access, participation and learning of students with disabilities, global development issues, high skills and giftedness. Some of these relevant areas were selected in the study presented here, which will be cited later.

This way the student assistance policy for programs and lines of action seek to favor the democratization of access, permanence and success in the formative process and, in addition, it has the professional insertion of the student, aiming at the inclusion of people who are in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability.

In 2008, with Law n. 11.892 (BRASIL, 2008), the Federal Institutes of Education, Science and Technology were created, which bring with them a set of demands based on the commitment to guarantee equality and social justice in the scope of the Federal Technological Network.

In the case of IFCE, at the time of this research, it had 32 operating campuses, located in different municipalities in the state of Ceará, and with a total of 401 courses offered, according to information available on the website of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Ceará (2018). These campuses

offer, throughout the territory of the Ceará State, from technical courses of Youth and Adult Education (EJA), National Program of Access to Technical Education and Employment (Pronatec), regular technical and undergraduate courses (technology, licensing and bachelor's degrees), graduate (*lato sensu* and *stricto sensu*) and courses of Initial and Continuing Training.

In addition to the issue of expanding access, it is important to think about the conditions of permanence

It is considered that with the expansion of this Federal Network there was the favoring and expansion, undoubtedly, in the conditions of access for young people from low-income social classes to a technical high school and undergraduate courses (bachelor's degree, licenciature and technological). However, in addition to the issue of expanding access, it is important to think about the conditions of permanence for this public in their respective modality of education.

In this argument, as Dourado, Garajau and Fonseca (2013) put it, the Student Assistance Policy aims to ensure the permanence of students who need some intervention to be able to complete the course, as well as ensure the right to higher education access, thus endorsing the equality of opportunities among students entering a higher educational level.

4. Impacts of student assistance on the trajectory of IFCE students – Canindé/Ceará campus

Do you have someone who does not adhere to the 'My FI, my life' project?

And when you start the course here, FI becomes your home.⁵

As explained in the statements of the students who participated in the research, in general, the students have an affective relationship with the campus where they study, considering it as a house and home, given that they experience considerable period of their day and their youth in this space. On campus, they built friendship bonds and incorporated new ways of being and taking part in the world.

In a complementary way, according to the words of Brenner, Dayrell, and Carrano (2008), the importance of coexistence and the centrality of peers (groups, interactions) in the process of human formation in young people, in the construction of their individual and collective identities is mentioned.

Regarding the questions asked during the execution of the focus group, initially, the interviewed subjects were asked what they considered pertinent to the student assistance available to make the continuity in the higher education course happen until its conclusion, which will be exposed consecutively in the sequence.

4.1 Understanding student assistance from the perspective of the interlocutors

In general terms, the answers to the question from the young people: “What is pertinent to the student assistance to make available for the permanence to happen in the higher education course until its conclusion?”, they were associated with the transfer of an income (money), since many students of this campus are from country towns and do not have sufficient financial conditions to pay for the expenses related to rent, or as reported by a research interlocutor: “food, transportation... everything... Internet that you have to have at home... then I think this is the help needed, in my opinion”, in which it should be responsible for providing these needs.

The aid, here, is taken as a synonym of money, used to meet the needs of each person. It is also worth noting that the financial conditions and the place of residence affect the way young people experience their youth, as explained in an earlier moment.

This question emphasizes that even for students from the city of Canindé, where the IFCE is located, there is a need to receive transportation aid, considering that, according to one of the interlocutors: “[...] the campus is far from the city... has to pay for transportation”.

In this situation, students must disburse money daily to get to the place of study. Moreover, it is common for students, after the classroom period, to have to stay or return to the Institution for another period of study, as the students highlight in their reports, for example: “[...] sometimes, you have to go home, have lunch and come back... then you receive a little bit of money per week [...]”.

The participants in the focus group reported that it is also common for a student to receive only one grant at a time. In this way, for example, they either receive housing aid, or transportation aid. According to them, reporting the reproduction of the speeches from the professionals who work with student help, this happens so that a greater number of students are contemplated with financial aid. However, in this way, one basic need stands out from the other, while all the needs should be met, because they are social demands.

Seeking to reduce social and economic inequalities is a mandatory condition in democratization of the Brazilian education

It is understood, as Rosa (2014) reiterates, that equality should be proposed not only in the perspective of access, because equality also encompasses other aspects, such as: the provision of necessary conditions for the participation and completion of the undergraduate course, ensuring conditions that enable financial and educational aid for students from a more disadvantaged social strata.

Still on this issue, Arruda, Araújo and Lopes (2016) consider that seeking to reduce social and economic inequalities is a mandatory condition in democratization of the Brazilian education. And for this, in addition to access, there is a need for mechanisms that guarantee the poorest and economically excluded students a permanence of quality.

The research interlocutors, when understanding the weaknesses pointed out by the student aid in this campus, propose alternatives that could contribute to the improvement in the quality of the training process, such as:

The construction of a cafeteria, a university restaurant. Thus, I would not need to go home and come back in the afternoon. We could be here in the afternoon and stay all day, morning, and afternoon. These actions should be built collectively, with the assistance personnel doing the actions.

From the reports so far in evidence, it has been found that it is common in the universe of the routine of students who have more than one period of their day for dedicating to studies, which transposes the time allocated to the classroom, needing to remain on campus for a longer period than this activity.

On some days of the week, for example, the routine of the students takes place in all shifts, according to the report: "On Fridays, I remain from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.". By emphasizing the same subject about routine, other students clarify that: "I remain about three times a week for more than one period on campus; "I stay five days a week for more than one period on campus.

The prolonged on-campus permanence implies higher financial expenses for food and transportation, the latter especially for students who wish to travel to their homes and then return for one more day of study after a period of rest and lunch.

From this point on, the interlocutors emphasize that, due to a considerable time inside the campus, the space is considered their home. Daily and gradually, the students get to know each employee and build affective bonds with the other students, forming another family, as explained in the headings highlighted at the beginning of topic 3. In another block of questions, the students talked about what their lives would be like without student assistance. Emblematically, they answered that it would be:

A chaos. I would not be here, really. These aides are extremely helpful for those who are from another city. [...] If there were not any, it would be impossible for most of the people who are from the country towns to be here.

Since I joined the course, I get housing aid. For example, I don't have a mother who can afford to finance my education, who could say 'I will pay here for your studies, your food, your energy, your internet' [...].

These reports show the financial difficulty that families have in ensuring that these students continue their studies, since there is a set of expenses necessary to guarantee their permanence in a higher-level education.

Menezes (2012) points out that inequalities show up in the family, in school history, in life quality, and in access to the services and goods necessary for human existence. In this case, the student aid has as a priority, students whose socioeconomic conditions often prevent them from remaining in higher education.

In this bias, an issue that afflicts students who are contemplated with student assistance is the possible interruption that may exist in an aid, because who received it during a semester, does not mean that will receive it in the semester thereafter, which leads to uncertainty about the continuity of the studies. It should also be pointed out that, on several occasions, the aid was not received within the time allowed and the delay proved to be a tough time in life for these students.

In addition, the financial amount received from an aid is not always equivalent to what is necessary for a student to support himself. As the students pointed out during the focus group, for example, "you put there what you need, but the amount you receive is not a fixed amount. Both, the amount of money received is not fix, and the number of months that students may or may not receive certain aid is variable.

In the meantime, while it is recognized that financial assistance is very important for students to stay at the higher educational level, in another respect it is also understood that student assistance is not reduced to just financial assistance of any kind. In this perspective, Andrade, Santos and Cavaignac (2016, p. 32) warn that affirmative actions for entry into a higher educational institution are also for the improvement of basic education, the increase in the number of openings in universities and the development of permanence programs that are not limited exclusively to the university and financial assistance to students.

In turn, it was questioned that other student assistance services were used by students throughout their academic career. A priori, the interlocutors understand the following as student care services: the food, dental care, and nursing. Regarding these services, it was clear that many students were unaware of the existence of the nursing service on campus. Those who knew it and used it, reported that there was not enough material and not enough own physical and adequate space for the nursing sector.

On campus, the students emphasized that it would be proper to have a service of psychology, for the monitoring of students, and nutrition, to improve the menu of the meal. However, in the face of all the difficulties posed, the students like to study at the IFCE Canindé campus because, even far from the ideal conditions, they have:

[...] mobility of going home, of transportation, and the ability to return. If I could go to Fortaleza, I would, but I cannot. So, my hope is to graduate and get a job, being able to study what I really want, do you understand?

In this sense, to be in a higher education level reveals the hope for a better life and the fulfillment of your dreams. Higher education, therefore, in the representation of some interlocutors, is considered a generator of social mobility.

4.2 The choice of undergraduate course and the factors related to the university trajectory of the interlocutors

It appears that, in many cases, the courses chosen by the researched students are not the first course options, nor do they express the realization of their academic dreams. However, due to the context of inequalities of opportunities in which they are inserted, there is no way to materialize other academic endeavors.

To the detriment of this, many intend to take a second degree later, because they think they will be able to overcome obstacles once they have graduated. However, the interlocutors highlight that they do like to study on campus. Verify some reports:

I like it, because whether I want it or not, whether I like it or not, the campus has a good structure. For example, you can see the difference between being at IFCE and a public school in the city. You are here in your air-conditioned classroom, with a professor, who may or may not be didactic, but he has a master's degree, he has a doctorate. Then you go to a public school, all the chairs there are broken... professor, a principal who doesn't even know what's going on in the school. A reality like this contrasts a lot, you know? FI has a very good structure, it has a good library, we still don't have a worldwide collection of books, but the campus is very clean and if you like the course, you will take advantage of it, because it has a good structure, the campus has a good structure.

In such a case, the physical structure of the campus, in general, is praised by the students, even in the face of the weaknesses pointed out, this is a reason for staying in the higher education course. The choice of the course by these students sometimes happens due to exclusion or lack of opportunities: "I went for exclusion, in fact, I wanted to go to the health field, but due to living in the countryside, I had no way to afford living in Fortaleza, the closest is here, so I went for exclusion, Computer Networks [...]".

It was also noted that some students who had affinity with the science/math field ended up migrating to the Mathematics course, because the intended Engineering course, for example, is not offered on campus, nor in the city of origin. In view of this, the physical structure of the campus is an attractive factor for students: "Although it has a lot to do with the exclusion factor, when we get here at FI, we look and say: 'cool, there's a meal, there's a nice teacher, there's a room'".

In this way, students look to make the most of the restricted opportunities that are being presented to them at that time. It was noticed that the experience in the higher level generates impacts in the lives of students, either in the fear about the future and the expectations of the labor market after graduation, or by the new friendship relationships that were created in that space. These factors mentioned demarcated this period of academic life.

I think in the work sense, because you are coming to the course with the aim of getting a diploma and you think that you will have time to search for a job, to start a life. But at least for me, at the

moment that there is no more FI, there will be that hole missing, after the affection that you had with some people on campus and others not, because it is very good you meet with your friends, even if that teacher's class is very boring (laughs), you kill time there, the class goes by fast [...].

At that moment, it was clear that the educational context fills a significant part in the life of the interlocutors. And not belonging to this context generates an expectation and uncertainty about the insertion in the labor market. It is emphasized that, for many young people, the fear of the future is as Novaes states (2006, p. 110): "fear of not studying and not getting a job; of studying and not getting a job; of getting a job and then losing it; or of becoming unemployed".

Faced with all that was said, the subject was changed, and the young people were asked about the contribution of student assistance. Throughout their university career, the students understood that the student help to which they have access is "essential, but it fails", as one of the interviewees explained:

It is essential, because in my case, I live in the country with my husband. Every day, I come to IFCE spending, shall we say, needing the help of my relatives, because I only received the transportation aid for two semesters. Since my husband and I had an accident last semester, we spent two months in the hospital in Fortaleza. So, I had to stop studying and, therefore, I couldn't renew the financial aid. Now I see that the aid issue is essential, because many people do not have the financial conditions, live far away, and therefore, really need help. In my case, I spend on two public transportations. I spend more than R\$ 300 per month just for this. What if I don't have the aid? Another question is employment... Canindé also does not offer much employment.

From the above report, based on Finatti (2007), it is understood that student assistance aims to promote the necessary resources to overcome obstacles that prevent students without financial resources from living through the undergraduate studies and achieve a good curriculum performance, reducing the percentage of abandonment and dropping out of enrollments.

As the questions advanced during the focus group, it was found that, for the students surveyed, being in a higher education institution means that there was, according to one interlocutor, "an achievement and an opportunity for growth". While another expressed it as:

Would say that it is essential to be in higher education, because you enter as one person and leave as another one completely different. I have entered as a boy and I am going to leave here as an open-minded person, a person who knows more about what is right and what is wrong; how to keep going; how to plan your life. Even more, if you get a scholarship, start working and see if you like it, if you want that for your life. In comparison, in high school things are very much like this: 'accept'. And when you get into the undergraduate degree, you start to see a completely different

world, of possibilities, of people. And you also see that you can do a master's and doctoral degrees outside the country, that you can achieve this. It is especially important.

In this situation, the entry and experience at the higher level reveal a new way of thinking, the encounter with the new and with the unknown. They also express maturity and reflection on old attitudes and thoughts. They also are the continuation of a path of study that takes place since childhood. And in this journey, the students perceive the responsibility that society attributes to them in the direction of a life based on education and qualification for the labor market, hence, see the speeches below:

It's the continuation of your life: elementary school, high school, college; 'In college you have to get a job'; 'A specialization'; 'Then you get married and have a child'. So, you follow the trail that they say you should take socially. However, not everyone was able to follow the guiding line without facing obstacles and/or difficulties.

Who knew I'd go to university! In high school, we are very influenced: there is Sisu [Unified Selection System], there is Proni [University for All Program] and there is Fies [Student Finance Fund]. But they are very distant dreams. That's when I got my grade: Canindé. I went there. And I was approved. I went there to fill out my application super happy! Guys, I passed the Sisu' (laughs). I started the first semester with such great excitement. Wow, that's teacher number 10. In the beginning, I studied and spent the day here. It was a very big dream. We mature a lot here. In high school, we are really trapped.

I won't tell you the age (laughs), but 30 years later, I made it. For you, it is a dream, because you are young. Now, imagine me: high school, they didn't have it in my town. Or you could get a bonus in a bus company, that is, you had those thirty days of free bus tickets, but the rest of the class would already give up in the middle of the road, because they didn't have money to go every day. Then, when I got here, it was very rewarding, it's very good for us.

The entry and experience at the higher level reveal a new way of thinking

The reports expressed the difficulties met by certain students to enter the higher educational level. For Finatti (2007), education in the twentieth century appears as a target of desire for the working class, enabling transformation in the status quo, power, and social mobility. In this direction, it is interesting to see the role of student aid in this process.

4.3 Weaknesses and potentialities of IFCE - Canindé campus and student aid

The idea that public education, and more specifically higher education, is a privilege, provides the understanding that there should be a reduction in public funds for this educational level in Brazil, as well as the adjustment of educational parameters to the process of commoditization of higher education.

Education, currently, has deepened the social distancing between the privileged minority and the majority increasingly excluded from society, with an intensification of this process in the context of a neoliberal society. Thus, deconstructing this logic is a hard and time-consuming process, and for this to happen it is necessary to think of basic and higher education as priorities for society and the Brazilian State.

Even perceiving themselves in an exclusive reality, the students of the IFCE Canindé campus highlighted that they are in a good campus in relation to the others, because in other campuses: “[...] the library only works until 5 pm”; “there are campuses in which the meal is horrible”; “there are campuses that do not offer any kind of help”. Soon, they recognized the weaknesses and potentialities of the campus:

The structure of the FI is good. It has an air-conditioned room; it is lined; all rooms have a projector.

The toy library is for community use, for all courses. But since we in Mathematics don't have a room, we don't have anything like this, we occupy the spaces we find. The toy library is also used as a classroom due to the increase in the number of classes. The new block hasn't come out yet.

Faced with many issues that need to be improved and many advances in the Canindé campus in relation to the other campuses, the interlocutors said: “We can't settle for less. Even if we see something good, we should think about improving [...]”.

In this regard, the students reported what has improved since their arrival on campus. According to them, those who started in the first class of the evening course faced several difficulties, stating that: “They wanted to take a test to see if it could work. Her reports also revealed that, at first, there were no functioning of the libraries and when they opened, the system didn't work as it was supposed to. To go to the bathroom, the students themselves had to turn on the lights; there was no security. Over time, the library started to run until 8:00 p.m., the bathroom lights were on, there was a night meal, there was an employee at the reception desk.

Notably, the students of the night period experience more difficulties in relation to the students who study in other periods. Bathroom cleaning, for example, is not done at night.

We continue with the presentation of the last three assertions exposed to the students for purposes of debate and reflection. The first assertion sought to understand if the students had entered the course and the higher education institution they chose. Some students said yes, but others revealed what follows:

For me, it was never a dream to have/enter a university, I did not have this thought of wanting to have higher education. But I got into Physical Education and fell in love, because it is not just sports, it is several other subjects. However, it is not something I dreamed of having, it was society that placed this thought in my mind: ‘You can only get a better job if you have higher education’. But for me, to work, to have a job, would already be reasonable.

The student in question reported that if today she were given the decision about entering higher education, even so, she would not see it as a dream: "It would not be a dream, but certainly, I would have a more open mind, and I would know that it really opens more doors".

Dayrell (2003) points out that there are different ways of being young, because each young person gives particular meaning to what he or she lives and to his or her choices. Thus, sometimes higher education can be seen as the realization of a dream, sometimes it can also be interpreted as an achievement without much importance.

Regarding the relationship between student assistance and improvement of performance and academic education, students understand that student assistance is: "fundamental" and "helped to remain" studying, "since to have the academic education I need to be present". They explained that "without it we would not be here. And another assessed it:

You come from high school and in an instant, you have to have money, or you have to drop out because your course is in the morning, and you have to work, to try to continue.

Another point that deserves clarification is the interposition of work as an indispensable means to guarantee the permanence of students in higher education, especially when student assistance does not reach students who are unable to stay in higher education without financial support.

In this logic, student assistance restrains access to the world of work in an early manner and supports the decision of exclusive dedication to studies. Without transportation or housing aid, many students would have to conciliate study and work to be able to remain in college, according to what can be seen in the following speech:

I finished my high school in 2009 and started working. Therefore, to stop working and to run out of money, relying on family support and to live an academic life, is extremely complicated. Especially in a city that doesn't give you the opportunity to work part-time. Here, you only stay in a job if you go to work from 7 (in the morning) to 7 (in the evening). In my case, at the end of high school, I started working part-time, and I earned half a salary. But I put it all in my savings account. So, when I came in, I had no prospect of getting any help. But when my savings runs out, I will have to earn more, I will have to figure out a solution.

In relation to academic performance and its interfaces with student assistance, the survey respondents answered about the influence of grades: "In my case, it does not depend on the question of grades. The student assistance helps in the permanence of the course, but not in terms of grades. In my case, it does not influence". Problematizing these notions, the following is visualized: "If I had to work, it would greatly affect the grades. But not in my case." And another highlighted it:

If I had no help, as is my case, that I have studying financial aid, I would have to work and could not spend the day here. If I were to work, surely my hours would be worse.

A high-quality formation is one that includes experiences that go beyond the classroom

It is therefore understandable that student assistance is characterized as a strategy for keeping the target audience at the higher educational level. In this aspect, Finatti (2007) states that democratizing higher education means both the guarantee of access as well as the permanence with integrity and academic development, added to the quality of education. Thus, student assistance is necessary, since the free education cannot ensure the permanence of students located in unfavorable socioeconomic conditions, trying to meet and enable, therefore, their personal and academic needs after entering the higher education level, suggests Finatti (2007). For Graeff (2014), the development of student assistance actions should enable equal opportunities, improve academic performance and retain evasion.

It is understood that a high-quality formation is one that includes experiences that go beyond the classroom. A technical visit makes it possible for students to get in touch with real facts about a future profession and networking. Congresses, seminars, and lectures are productive spaces for the exchange of knowledge and the improvement of certain subjects. For this reason, it is relevant the guarantee of aid that enables students to take part in such moments during their formative process. This argument shows that student assistance should involve the most varied aspects of the university trajectory.

5. Final considerations

With the research, it was captured that the student assistance is a fundamental premise for the permanence of students in the IFCE Canindé campus in higher education, once the unfavorable socioeconomic conditions in which the interlocutors of the research are inserted are explicit, especially those from the towns located in the country side of Ceará.

In this context, in the scenario of democratization of higher education, it is understood that it is not enough to guarantee only access/ingress to higher education, given that it is substantial to ensure the materialization of policies, such as student assistance, to enable students to remain in the chosen course. In the meantime, it is understood that student assistance enhances the permanence of the students during the academic career.

It is noteworthy that the absence or lack of financial resources to pay for the expenses that involve student life, such as food, logistics and housing, linked to the precariousness of resources for transportation and displacement, directly impact the condition of permanence of researched students in the higher educational level.

Given these reasons, dealing with issues related to dropout and retention of students in undergraduate courses, given these barriers, is somewhat challenging, since

student assistance cannot reach everyone who needs it, or is insufficient to meet the real needs of each student.

In view of the above, it is pointed out that sometimes the student assistance provides opportunities for students to remain at the higher level, sometimes excludes them, because of its noncontinuity when it is still necessary, or because of its precariousness of actions.

Notas

¹ This article is the product of a research financed by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), entitled “Youth and Student Assistance: the social right to the effectiveness of a democratic public policy on a Campus of the Federal Institute of Education, Science and Technology of Ceará”, conducted by the Group of Studies and Research on Public Policies and Social Exclusion (Geppes) and by the Youth, Vocational Education and Work Observatory (Jeptra), linked to the State University of Ceará (UECE), under the coordination of the Ph.D. Francisca Rejane Bezerra Andrade.

² The focus group is a data collection technique that, through group interaction, promotes among the participants a broad problematization on an addressed theme. According to Backes et al. (2011, p. 2), it is a type of investigation that stimulates debate, because it allows the themes to be more problematized than in an individual interview situation. The participants listen to the opinions of others and change their position or better substantiate their initial opinion.

³ The execution of the focus group started with 14 participants. However, one student, after a brief time of discussion, chose to be absent. At the end of the focus group, another student, even taking part in the entire process of implementation, withdrew and did not sign the attendance list. Thus, 13 people took part in the execution of the focus group and formally signed the attendance list and the Free and Informed Consent Form for 12 people.

⁴ In a complementary way, individual interviews of a semi-structured nature were conducted with some of the participants, which will not be discussed in this article.

⁵ The research resorted to the focus group as a data collection technique, as explained in the methodological path. In this sense, in view of the constant interaction between the subjects involved, it was not the methodological objective of the research to identify the interlocutors at the time of the transcription of the focus group, but rather to analyze the set / totality of the reflections freely undertaken on each question presented (and not individually).

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