

Dental Instruments Loan Bank as a student permanence policy in Dentistry graduation and its social relevance for quota students of a public university in Bahia

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to analyze the social importance of the Instrumentalization Project for the permanence of the quota student of the Dentistry course of a public higher education institution (HEI) in Bahia. It is a case study with a qualitative approach with a descriptive and cross-sectional nature. Data was collected from interviews guided by a semi-structured script. Eight quota students regularly enrolled in the course were randomly selected. The treatment of the collected material used the technique of Content Analysis in the thematic and hermeneutic-dialectical modalities and the results were categorized as follows: "Course choice and the Difficulty of Adaptation", "(Un)knowledge about the Student Permanence Policies of the HEI", "Limitations of the Residence Policy of the HEI Dentistry Course" and "The Importance of the Student Permanence Policy and Solidarity among Students in Combating Academic Dropout". The social relevance is given by being an innovative strategy that allows low-income students to pursue a career that brings good financial returns. Therefore, it contributes to avoiding or reducing academic dropout, although it does not cover all instruments and materials. Some of them are of low quality, which can create an obstacle to the consolidation of the permanence policy by harming the learning process and causing the student to buy some instruments to carry out the practices so that there is no difficulty in performing some procedures.

Descriptors: Education, Dental. Social Inclusion. Teaching Materials. Public Policy.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to the government of Bahia, affirmative action policies “are special programs and measures adopted by the State and the private sector to correct racial inequalities and to promote equal opportunities”¹. Higher education institutions (HEIs) created these permanence policies to guarantee access through the reservation of vacancies for these students, and permanence policy, by creating measures that allow the student to remain in graduation until its conclusion.

The most widespread affirmative action policy at the national level is the so-called “Quota Law”, Law n° 12,711, of August 29, 2012, which made it possible for self-declared black students – blacks and browns –, indigenous and/or from public schools with a per capita income of less than one and a half minimum wages to enter federal universities²⁻⁴.

Bahia also has legal provisions to combat inequality, such as Law 13,182, of June 6, 2014, which establishes in its article 6, item VII, the implementation of affirmative action measures and programs aimed at combating racial inequalities in education, culture, sports, and health, among other areas. Another Law No. 13,458, of December 11, 2015, institutes the State Project for Remaining Assistance to students in conditions of the socioeconomic vulnerability of the State Public Universities of Bahia^{1,5}.

In 2006, the HEI of this research established the reservation of places for students from public, black, indigenous, and *quilombola* schools. It became necessary to create measures to ensure the permanence of these students at the university as the profile of these incoming students was modified.

The reduction in the profiles of privileged social classes in HEIs does not necessarily mean that family origin no longer influences the

chances of entering or completing the different existing courses^{6,7}. When interviewing 27 undergraduates from various areas, Zago (2006)⁶ observed that the exclusion of knowledge during primary education is also felt when the student enters higher education. Students with low-education parents and black and indigenous students are less likely to complete courses of high social prestige⁷.

Dental surgeons must master the technique of procedures that is only acquired after practice with the use of materials, equipment, and instruments specific to the area, being an expensive course that, in many cases, is not consistent with the family income of some of the students⁸. Brazilian HEIs, faced with this reality, seek the implementation of Instrumental Loan Banks (ILB) as a form of student permanence policy⁹⁻¹¹. In 2011 the HEI of this research acquired dental instruments to contemplate and guarantee the permanence of all students as a universal policy, which includes quota holders and non-quota holders. The bank of this HEI has all the instruments and equipment identified as essential for learning by the Brazilian Association of Dental Education (ABENO)¹² and some additional items.

Initially, these instruments were under the management of the students from the 3rd semester since it is the beginning of outpatient and laboratory practices. The students keep these instruments from the 3rd to the 10th semester. When the instruments returned in the 10th semester, the new students from the 3rd semester received them. However, this way of conducting began to show logistical flaws. These instruments were underused or not used by some and unavailable to others who needed them. There was also loss and damage that made them unusable, making some kits received by new students incomplete, which harmed them.

In 2017, through a project to

instrumentalization the Dentistry course, the ILB was reformulated, being managed by the administrators and oral health assistants of the three dental clinics that make up the HEI campus. The instruments were collected and organized according to the types of procedures performed in the practical activities and distributed among the clinics. The student receives the sterilized instruments, uses, sanitizes, and returns them on the same day for sterilization and use the next day, guarantees rotation, increases the use, and optimizes the student permanency policy.

The Project is in progress, and for its maintenance, the professors of the course carry out a physical evaluation of the instruments as experts for analysis, possible disposal, replacement, and the possibility of adding new items. Given the above, this research aimed to analyze the social importance of the Instrumentalization Project for the permanence of the quota student of the Dentistry course at a public university in Bahia.

2 METHODOLOGICAL COURSE

This research is characterized as a case study since it “consists of the deep and exhaustive study of one or a few objects, in a way that allows its broad and detailed knowledge”¹³. It is qualitative research, because “...it occupies a level of reality that cannot or should not be quantified”, and “it works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values, and attitudes”¹⁴ cross-sectional since the information obtained refers to a point in time and occurs at the same time¹⁵, that describes the experiences of 8 quota students - one student from each semester, from the 3rd semester, regardless of quota category and gender /student gender - who were regularly enrolled in the Dentistry course at a public university in Bahia.

The technique chosen for data collection was semi-structured interviews guided by a script

containing 17 questions. Due to the epidemiological condition and the social distancing measures imposed to reduce the contagion rates of COVID-19, the interviews were carried out in virtual rooms using the videoconferencing tool Google Meet (Google, Menlo Park, CA, USA). The research complied with the guidelines provided by the National Research Ethics Commission (CONEP) for research in virtual environments¹⁶. The research project was submitted to the Institutional Research Ethics Committee and approved under protocol number 5.252.920, de 22/02/2022.

The selection of participants was made by drawing random names from the lists for each semester made available by the Collegiate of the Dentistry course. The names of quota students for each admission semester were listed and numbered in an *Excel* spreadsheet (Microsoft, Redmond, WA, EUA), and the drawing was made by typing the formula “randombetween (lower; upper)”. The contact with the students was through a messaging application and the Free and Informed Consent Term (ICF) was sent to interviewees by e-mail.

The participants included in the research are students regularly enrolled in the Dentistry course, who entered by quotas, users of the ILB, signed the informed consent and agreed to answer the questions. The participants excluded in the research are who did not accept to answer the interview questions, non-quota holders, non-users of the student permanence policy of the course, and who did not sign the informed consent form.

In respect of the ethical principles of Research in Human and Social Sciences, before the interview, each participant was informed about the research and the ICF, as mentioned in items III and IV of Resolution n° 196, 196, of October 10, 1996, chapter IV of Resolution n° 466, of December 12, 2012, and in Chapter III of

Resolution nº 510, de April 7, 2016¹⁷⁻¹⁹. The participants were aware of the confidentiality of the information, protection of the image, and the risks and benefits of the research through the informed consent form, also before the interview.

The interviews did not exceed 30 minutes and a computer program called Open Broadcaster Software Studio, OBS Studio²⁰. They were saved in individual folders for each interviewee, along with their respective signed ICF and the full transcripts of each one. A total of 11 quota students were drawn. However, three students did not respond to the contact. There was no need to expand the sample, as there was data saturation, the concepts were identified, and translated into categories that encompassed the phenomenon of investigation, and no new theme emerged^{21,22}.

The Statistical treatment of data was performed using content analysis in the thematic modality and later expanded to the use of the hermeneutic-dialectical method. Thematic analysis is responsible for discovering the nuclei of meaning in the speeches and realizing if their presence or frequency means something. Two concepts base the hermeneutic-dialectical method: hermeneutics, which is related to understanding the meaning of what is said, and how things present themselves and happen. Dialectics is responsible for the confrontation of ideas and the critical evaluation of what is said^{23,24}. Reading the transcription to master the information reported in the texts was the first phase of the data analysis. To find the central ideas about the object of study and determine the nuclei of meaning^{23,24}. In the second phase, the researchers sought to reach the nuclei of understanding the text by defining categories²³.

The analytical categories were: Academic Dropout, Quality of Instruments, and Discrimination. The empirical categories were: Choice for the Course, Adaptation Difficulty,

(Un)knowledge of the HEI's Student Permanence Policies, Logistic Difficulties, and Overcoming Strategies. The data were grouped and ordered in a table (figure 1), organizing the speech fragments according to the identified categories. From there, it was categorized the results as follows: Course choice and Adaptation Difficulty, (Un)knowledge about the IES Student Remaining Policies, Limitations of the IES Dentistry Course Remaining Policy, and The Importance of the Residency Policy Student Permanence and Solidarity among Students in Combating Academic Dropout. The answers were correlated and grouped according to convergence, divergence, complementarity, and differences. Then, an essay was carried out for each theme.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research participants are all female and named according to the order of the interviews. Regarding the reservation of vacancies, one belonged to the category of a white student in a public school (Interviewee 1), six black (black or brown) in a public school (Interviewed 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7) and one indigenous (Interviewee 8).

Course Choice and the difficulty of adaptation

Most of the interviewees (E1, E3, E5, E6, and E7) stated that they did not have Dentistry as their first choice but Medicine. In 2013, a cross-sectional study with 94 students of the Dentistry course at the Faculty of Dentistry of the University of São Paulo (FOUSP) showed that, for 43.5% of the students, Dentistry was not the first option. Among them, 73% stated that the first option would be Medicine²⁵.

The significant number of students who chose Medicine as their first option may be related to the fact that students believe that there is a similarity between the two areas and choose Dentistry because it is less competitive.

However, over time, students may be frustrated because of this, students need to enter the because these are different fields of study, undergraduate having a broad view of the despite both beings in the health field. Then, dentistry field of work²⁵.

Figure 1. Organization according to the stages of content analysis

Categories	Nucleus of Sense	Synthesis
Course choice and the Adaptation Difficulty	Course choice	The trajectory of students moments before entering the University; decision making of which course to choose; main difficulties after admission.
	Adaptation Difficulty	
(Un)knowledge about the HEI's Student Remaining Policies	(Un)knowledge about the HEI's Student Remaining Policies	How quota holders maintain themselves in graduation; which affirmative action policies of the Institution the interviewees know.
Limitations of the IES Dentistry Course Permanence Policy	Quality of Instruments	How the deficiencies of the policy act as an impediment to the effectiveness of the policy; n embarrassment for the student when using the policy instruments; distribution of instruments among clinics and lack of training in human resources.
	Discrimination	
	Logistics Difficulties	
The Importance of Student Permanence Policy and Solidarity among Students in Combating Academic Dropout	Academic Dropout	High cost of materials lists and impossibility of working; being supported by family members and/or receiving contribution from the HEI; the ways of overcoming the barriers that make it difficult to stay at the university.
	Overcoming Strategies	

Only E2 and E4 said they had some identification with the Dentistry course after searching on the internet, but they felt a connection with the health field in general.

[...] I always wanted to study a course in the health field and then, among the options, right? I never dreamed of doing Medicine as everyone dreams, and Nursing was not an option for me either. [...] among the options I had was Dentistry. I was never in love, [...] as people say “the dream of entering the course”, but I felt identified as soon as [...] I started researching about it to see if that was what I wanted to take the entrance exam so I entered and today I am in love (E2).

[...] I chose Dentistry because among the professions I was researching, it was the one that I identified with the most. [...] there were subjects I like to study, and it is an area that opens doors to different paths. There are many specialties and areas of expertise, so it is much easier for you to find yourself too(E4).

Interviewee 8 was the only one to bring as a motivation to choose Dentistry as a dream she had since childhood: “Well, I chose Dentistry initially because it was a childhood dream, right?”. She added that over time she analyzed the reality of her family and found out:

[...] I was analyzing my family's social and economic issues, and I realized that it was

necessary to have someone who worked in the health field. [...] even more related to my family from my father, right? That is an indigenous family. My father is indigenous, and I am the first indigenous person to study Dentistry. So, it was a great victory for us, and it still is, right? (E8).

The reasons given by those who chose a career in Dentistry as a second option were the broad role the dental surgeon may have in the job market, the similarity with Medicine field, and because it is a profession that takes care of people²⁵. Once Dentistry was chosen as the course to be studied, it was possible to notice that among the interviewees who were aware that it was an expensive course (E1, E2, E3, E6, E7) did not give up, although expressing concern about how they would remain at this course. The speeches permeate the constant dialogue with family members who promise support:

[...] when I came here, I imagined this issue of money to buy materials, and she said "calm down! I will help you", but I know that like it or not, it is tight, right? and she does not just have me as a daughter, she has two other people (E6).

[...] I talked to my parents and let them know, because [the course] is full-time, I would not be able to work [...]. I said I would try. That we were going to go in to see... That I was going to look for ways to help... But they said it was ok, that we would find a way, and then I went in... But I went in afraid [...] of the material lists (E1).

The interviewees were asked whether they had difficulty adapting to the university's rhythm and learning the contents of the classes in the first years of the course. Most of them said they had difficulty (E2, E3, E4, E5), and the most reported was the transition in the way of teaching and learning, which, according to some of them, in

higher education differs from high school and the preparatory course: "I felt a lot because we leave school studying in one way, go to the prep course and study in a completely different way and at the University it is another rhythm (E4)". Higher demands by teachers, a higher level of autonomy by students, the fact of being in a complex institution in terms of rules and bureaucracies, associated with difficulties in relationships with colleagues and professors, difficulties in managing time for academic tasks, and the missing the family are related to the negative repercussions on the students' lives²⁶.

The most difficulties are in the initial semesters during the basic theoretical subjects.

[...] The subjects in Dentistry are very excessive. It is also a very extensive workload. So it is hard to reconcile. [...] Mainly these subjects [...] that are more in the abstract, right? One thing is a subject that we see in practice its application, another thing is a more theoretical subject. Usually, the initial subjects of the course end up being like this (E4).

This finding contrasts with another study that pointed to the clinical phase as being the most stressful compared to students from the pre-clinical phase due to the greater demand for patient management²⁷.

(Un)knowledge about the HEI's Student Remaining Policies

After studying the transcripts was verified a worry data about the lack of knowledge about the student permanence policies offered by the University. In addition to the specific permanence policy of the Dentistry course, the interviewees mentioned the other available permanence policies such: as the University Restaurant (E2 and E8), the University Residence (E6, E7, and E8), and the Permanence Scholarship (E8). The University offers, in addition to the loan policy for dental

instruments, the University Restaurant, two University Residences (one for indigenous students and the other for non-indigenous students), and financial aid.

The majority of the interviewees mentioned “Mais Futuro” (E1, E3, E4, E5, E6, E7) as an institutional permanence policy. However, this is a program created by the government of the state of Bahia for low-income students from the state network of higher education²⁸. It is a widely publicized program at the University, which includes a considerable number of students and proves to be, according to the interviewees, one of the first ways to guarantee financial aid as soon as they enter the course:

[...] I already got into college researching permanence policies. And then I found out “Mais Futuro”. So I went in prepared, like, to run after and try. [...] In the second, in the third semester, we already had a material list, we already had something to buy, and then I started to receive the “Mais Futuro” from the second semester (E1).

I did not have any difficulties because when I got into the University I found out about the “Mais Futuro” public notice. [...] As soon as I entered I became a scholarship holder of “Mais Futuro” (E2).

The “Mais Futuro” permanence grant, according to Interviewee 1, ended up being used to buy dental materials. The participants cite scientific initiation, extension, and monitoring scholarships as permanence policies or demonstrate that they do not know what is or is not a student permanence policy. The speeches also showed that the meritocratic grants that should be used for students to invest in academic projects are been used as student permanence grants.

Limitations of the Permanence Policy of the Dentistry Course

Although the ILB contains in its inventory a

good part of the instruments requested by the professors, students still need to spend considerable amounts to acquire items asked by some professors, as reported by Interviewee 7 “[...] not all the materials we get. In the vast majority, we end up having to buy”. At the same time that the interviewees express their relief at the existence of the permanence policy in their speeches, there is a concern about having losses in their learning in the face of some materials that have been damaged by time and use:

[...] Especially in orthodontics this semester [...] I felt difficulty because the pliers are not good, and we need to bend. As there are [...] two pliers per student, I took pliers that were not so good, and then I felt impaired. Sometimes in practice, I asked my friend “hey, lend me yours quickly so I can do this turn here”. But I felt a little impaired. [...] (E2). [...] It happened to me with a needle holder when it kept getting stuck. So, when I went to suture the patient [...] I ended up having more difficulty than I would have because of this, right?! You are doing the procedure with all the nervousness and stuff and still have to deal with this stress. Then our advisor teacher ended up recommending buying one for ourselves as it is something that is regularly used (E4).

A study at the Faculty of Dentistry showed a similar result, where quota students do not receive complete lists, and some instruments are already outdated or damaged⁹. From the speeches of the interview was possible to see the contradictory opinions on the quality of the instrumentals offered by the University:

There are instrumentals of good quality. For me, the ones I caught and the ones I catch nowadays are counted on the fingers of inferior quality. They are counted on the fingers, and the rest are of good quality. And everything is a matter of student zeal.

Some students take care better, and some students do not care so well (E4, E5).

The students point out that the lack of care from the policy users is one of the causes of the low quality of instruments available at the HEI. Maybe this negligence is related to the lack of knowledge of the correct way to clean and use these instrumentals. When asked if they had suffered discrimination by professors or colleagues for using the material from the policy of permanency or any other brand considered inferior to that requested by the professors, most answered that they did not suffer any embarrassment. (E1, E2, E3, E6, E7). Only Interviewees 4 and 5 reported:

[...] Some professors are specific about it when they say: "you have to buy that brand", and if you do not buy it, he will deduct a point from your grade. And this reached the level of seeming that the teacher has some relationship with the store or the brand that made that instrumental. [...] Sometimes a student who has even the best technique, but just because he does not have that instrument, takes fewer points? What are we evaluating at all, you know?! (E4) [...] It is in the sense of "this brand is not so good" or "it wasn't the one I wanted". It is much more for what the professor wants, such as "I wanted such a thing, and I do not have it, so this one is not good". Sometimes it can be even more expensive, "but it is not what I wanted". (E5).

Another paper showed the same, in which participants who use dental instruments provided by the university felt discriminated against and misunderstood by a few professors, embarrassingly approaching students and speaking loudly while criticizing the material⁹. According to this research, the main barriers to consolidating the ILB as a student permanence policy are the way the materials are delivered and the lack of training of the employees responsible for delivery and

organizing them in the three clinics of the HEI.

The importance of the Student Permanence Policy and solidarity among students in the fight against academic dropout

The participants were asked if they had to work to stay in the course and all the answers were no, and one of them reported that she had to leave her job due to the demands of graduation:

[...] I already worked before entering the University, and when I entered, I quit my job because I had to dedicate myself one hundred percent to studying, and I felt difficulty with the rhythm, right? Because our grade is extensive (E2).

About the alternatives that the interviewees use to stay on the course, they said:

[...] As I am a "Mais Futuro" scholarship holder, [...], as well as the scholarship from PET [Tutorial Education Program] that I got in the fourth semester, because of these scholarships [...] I stay on the course today because it helps me to purchase materials, [...] transportation, food, and everything else. I do not know what I would do if I did not have these two scholarships [...] (E2).

The course requires students to buy, in addition to the instruments, a considerable number of disposables materials. These are materials sometimes lacking at the institute, such as gloves, masks, caps, syringes, needles, gauze, anesthetic solutions, restorative material, etc. The strategies used by the students to acquire the missing materials are: splitting the purchase into several installments at dental material stores (E3 and E5); asking senior students and teachers to specify the materials that will be used during the semester; selling raffle tickets to buy materials for collective use; check the materials they have at the Institution before buying (E1, E2, E6, E7, and E8) and purchase materials used with classmates collectively (E1, E2, E3, E4, E5 e E7).

Similarly, in another HEI, students have to buy consumables and create individual and collective strategies to buy what they need to participate in practical classes. Similarly, in another HEI, students have to buy consumables and create individual and collective strategies to buy what they need to participate in practical classes. Despite the efforts from the institution, students, and their families, this problem makes permanence difficult, and it may be an exclusion factor⁹. Students were asked if the policy of permanence in the Dentistry course contributed to keeping them studying, and all of them said yes. Of all, only Interviewee 4 does not receive any scholarship:

“[...] I do not get any scholarship from UEFS. [...] that is why it gets a little heavier for me. I end up relying only on the loan of materials.”

In her speech, she sums up all the feelings of anguish and fear that many undergraduates in Dentistry feel every semester:

It is quite complicated because it is not cheap, and we always be like “hey, could it be that this semester the list is more expensive? is it cheaper? will I be able to buy it? what if I will not get it?”, so it's quite complicated [...] (E4).

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This policy is socially relevant because it is an innovative strategy that gives students from less social classes the opportunity to pursue a career that allows a satisfactory financial return and because of its high social prestige. After admission, the educational system segregates those who can buy the instruments from those who cannot, thus reproducing the inequities experienced outside the university.

It was possible to verify that this policy of permanence contributes to avoiding or reducing academic dropout in the Dentistry course by allowing a considerable reduction in expenses with

the materials necessary for the training of students. However, it does not include all the instruments and materials from the lists, making the students and their families make an effort to buy what is missing, even if it is an obligation of the institution.

Emphasizing that the low quality of some instruments is an obstacle to the consolidation of the policy of permanence of the course, as it ends up harming the learning process, making the student buy the instruments to carry out the practices and, do not finish the course with disability in the execution of some procedure.

The university needs to be aware of failures in the conduct of measures taken to combat academic dropout since the university, especially in the public education system, should not be an environment that socially excludes individuals. As a result, managers must seek to promote adequate teaching and learning conditions for quota students.

RESUMO

Banco de Empréstimo de Instrumentais como política de permanência estudantil na graduação em Odontologia e a sua relevância social para os estudantes cotistas de uma universidade pública baiana

O objetivo dessa pesquisa foi analisar a importância social do Projeto de Instrumentalização para a permanência do estudante cotista do curso de Odontologia de uma instituição de ensino superior (IES) pública baiana. Caracteriza-se como um estudo de caso com uma abordagem qualitativa, de caráter descritivo e de corte transversal. Os dados foram coletados a partir de entrevistas norteadas por um roteiro semiestruturado. Foram selecionados, de forma aleatória por meio de sorteio, 8 estudantes cotistas regularmente matriculados no curso. O tratamento do material coletado utilizou a técnica de Análise de Conteúdo nas modalidades temática e hermenêutica-dialética e os resultados foram categorizados como segue: “Opção pelo Curso e a Dificuldade de Adaptação”, “(Des)conhecimento sobre as Políticas de Permanência Estudantil da IES”, “Limitações da

Política de Permanência do Curso de Odontologia da IES” e “A Importância da Política de Permanência Estudantil e da Solidariedade entre os Estudantes no Combate à Evasão Acadêmica”. A relevância social se dá por ser uma estratégia inovadora que possibilita ao estudante de menor renda seguir uma carreira que traz bom retorno financeiro. Portanto, contribui para evitar ou diminuir a evasão acadêmica, embora não contemple todos os instrumentais e materiais de consumo das listas, com alguns instrumentais de baixa qualidade, gerando empecilho para a consolidação da política de permanência ao prejudicar o processo de aprendizagem e fazendo com que o estudante tenha que comprar alguns instrumentais para realizar as práticas sem deficiência na execução de algum procedimento.

Descritores: Educação em Odontologia. Inclusão Social. Materiais de Ensino. Ações Afirmativas.

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