Considerations about a student assistance program as a permanence policy

Considerações sobre um programa de assistência ao estudante como uma política de permanência

Consideraciones sobre un programa de asistencia estudiantil como política de permanencia

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ABSTRACT
This article deals with a case study carried out at the State University of Mato Grosso – UNEMAT in which permanence in Higher Education is discussed. The objective was to understand the IES’ student assistance policy and analyze whether it is configured and/or being implemented as a permanence policy. We analyzed Resolution No. 019/2013–CONSUNI (University Council) that creates the Student Assistance Program and the notices for selecting students for housing and food assistance, from 2013 to 2015. We verified that the Program had the objective of providing financial support to students of undergraduate courses, with proven socioeconomic vulnerability. The intention of ensuring permanence with a return on improving learning was not found textually in the documents, nor were possible mechanisms for monitoring academic performance identified. We noted the existence of demand for the vacancies offered. However, these vacancies have not been filled in their entirety and there is still a significant dropout of vacancies that are granted, which demonstrates a deficiency in the implementation of this Program. We concluded that, in the period surveyed, at Unemat, permanence was being considered, but the actions were not fully implemented.
Keywords: higher education, access and permanence, student assistance.

RESUMO
Este artigo trata de um estudo de caso realizado na Universidade Estadual de Mato Grosso - UNEMAT, no qual se discute a permanência no Ensino Superior. O objetivo era entender a política de assistência aos alunos do IES e analisar se está configurada e/ou sendo implementada como uma política de permanência. Analisamos a Resolução nº 019/2013-CONSUNI (Conselho Universitário) que cria o Programa de Assistência ao Estudante e os editais de seleção de alunos para moradia e assistência alimentar, de 2013 a 2015. Verificamos que o Programa tinha como objetivo prestar apoio financeiro a estudantes de cursos de graduação, com vulnerabilidade socioeconômica comprovada. A intenção de garantir a permanência com retorno na melhoria da aprendizagem não foi encontrada textualmente nos documentos, nem foram identificados possíveis mecanismos de monitoramento do desempenho acadêmico. Observamos a existência de demanda para as vagas oferecidas. No entanto, estas vagas não foram preenchidas na sua totalidade e continua a verificar-se um abandono significativo das vagas que são concedidas, o que demonstra uma deficiência na execução do presente programa. Concluímos que, no período pesquisado, na Unemat, a permanência estava sendo considerada, mas as ações não foram totalmente implementadas.

Palavras-chave: ensino superior, acesso e permanência, assistência aos alunos.

RESUMEN
El presente artículo aborda un estudio de caso realizado en la Universidad Estatal de Mato Grosso – UNEMAT en el que se discute la permanencia en la Educación Superior. El objetivo fue comprender la política de asistencia al estudiante del IES y analizar si se configura y/o se implementa como una política de permanencia. Analizamos la Resolución N° 019/2013-CONSUNI (Consejo Universitario) que crea el Programa de Asistencia Estudiantil y los avisos para la selección de estudiantes para vivienda y asistencia alimentaria, de 2013 a 2015. Verificamos que el Programa tenía el objetivo de brindar apoyo financiero a los estudiantes de los cursos de pregrado, con probada vulnerabilidad socioeconómica. La intención de garantizar la permanencia con un retorno en la mejora del aprendizaje no se encontró textualmente en los documentos, ni se identificaron posibles mecanismos para monitorear el rendimiento académico. Hemos observado la existencia de demanda de las vacantes ofrecidas. Sin embargo, estas vacantes no se han cubierto en su totalidad y sigue habiendo un importante abandono de las vacantes que se conceden, lo que demuestra una deficiencia en la ejecución de este Programa. Concluímos que, en el período estudiado, en la Unemat, se estaba considerando la permanencia, pero las acciones no se implementaron completamente.

Palabras clave: educación superior, acceso y permanencia, asistencia estudiantil.
1 INTRODUCTION

The expansion of higher education in Brazil has been the subject of analysis by the GPAPES research group since 2010, focusing on the study of issues related to access and retention in higher education. To this end, we studied the Post-LDB Higher Education Expansion Policy, which made it possible to analyze official Brazilian State Programs such as Prouni, FIES, Pnaes/Pnaest, Enem/Sisu, among others. We demonstrate that the concern of the Brazilian State has focused on expanding access to higher education as an entry into undergraduate courses. However, in relation to permanence and completion, the policy is timidly moving forward in granting scholarships and/or student financing.

The end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s were marked by profound economic, technological, ideological and social changes. During this period, neoliberalism was on the rise in Latin America. In Brazil, economic issues, privatization and privatization also became part of the agenda of the educational system and the guidelines adopted by international organizations determined profound transformations in the education system. These changes directly influenced the expansion of higher education with a focus on private HEIs, from a results perspective and the business approach of the university, as stated by Luchmann (2007, p. 23), "this vision of the university as a company is even more accentuated in 1990s and has direct interference in the teacher-student relationship, in which the student becomes a client".

The great expansion in the number of private HEIs occurred mainly in the 1990s, affecting public HEIs with a decrease in investments, which go through a process of transferring public resources to private institutions, either directly or indirectly, through low-interest loans, in granting educational credits or providing financial or tax subsidies. For this to happen, there was permissiveness in the legislation, the result of a more neoliberal conception that has been present since the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (Law nº. 9,394/1996).

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1 Study and Research Group on Access and Permanence in Higher Education/Unemat.
Studying the process of democratization of higher education, through its expansion, goes beyond thinking about the mere expansion of the offer of vacancies. Democratizing means enabling greater participation of classes that remain on the "margins" of social policies. From this perspective, our studies understand the democratization and expansion of higher education, using Santos' (2002) concept of participatory democracy as the expanded participation of different actors in social decision-making, taking into account global decisions, but prioritizing it must be through local and regional decisions. Supporting this concept, we understand that higher education expansion policies have not served groups with less political representation in the state sphere, the most economically and socially vulnerable groups, the least favored social sectors and minority ethnicities.

The increase in the number of places in higher education was considerable in the period from 1996 to 2014. According to data from the Higher Education Census/INEP/MEC, we went from 634,236 places offered in 1996 to 3,545,294 in 2014. In 1996, we still had a number of enrollment of 1,868,529, which increased to 6,486,171 in 2014. This increase in the number of places and enrollments is also repeated in the State of Mato Grosso, in the same period it goes from 8,396 to 67,073, while the number of enrollments goes from 24,213 in 1996 to 128,419 in 2014.

However, this expansion has not reflected the growth in the number of students completing their degree in the same proportion. The number of graduates according to Census/INEP data in 1996 was 254,401 and in 2014 it was 837,304. If we consider the number of vacancies filled and the number of graduates, in Brazil, we observe a “non-completion” rate of 50.49% in 1996 and 60.33% in 2014. In the State of Mato Grosso, this rate reached 62.36% in 1996 and 67.91% in 2014. We found that some of those who enter higher education courses end up abandoning their studies, especially during the first semesters. Dropout has become one of the main problems faced by HEIs. For Baggi (2010, p. 13) “evasion is a complex social phenomenon, defined as the interruption in study cycles”. He adds that its evolution “is a problem that has been worrying
educational institutions in general [...], as the departure of students causes serious social, academic and economic consequences", we also add the waste of public resources, the frustrations of students and families and the loss of personal, professional and social potential.

This group's research is based on the understanding of access as inclusion in all senses and, mainly, enabling conditions for students to belong. In this sense, the concept of access that we use is supported by Silva and Veloso (2013, p. 729) "[...] access means ‘being part’, therefore, it refers to insertion, participation, acceptance". Studying access to higher education implies considering the dimensions of entry, retention, completion and training/quality of this level of education.

In this theoretical context, we understand that the democratization of higher education is not only effective through its expansion through the expansion of vacancies, entry into university is just the beginning of a much more complex journey, which are the dimensions of permanence, completion and quality.

According to Primão (2015, p. 55), "with regard to the established permanence policies, we can observe that both the State, through its specific programs, and the research carried out regarding permanence, are centered on the reality of students needy, expressing themselves in defense of almost exclusively financial assistance, as if this were the only threatening factor for the student in their university journey". We do not disregard the economic factor as one of the factors causing non-permanence, but it is not the only one nor the most preponderant. Focal assistance policies are fundamental and essential for low-income people, but they have not solved the problem of permanence.

According to the author, the economic factor inherent to the capitalist system creates the need for focal assistance policies, and states that "student assistance, in fact, has a focal nature". When dealing with the permanence debate, even recognizing the merits of an assistance policy, strategically, we aim for a universal social policy, as it focuses on more comprehensive actions that generalize care, which can enable active participation by everyone students in academic life.
The previous research we carried out on the policies of democratization and expansion of higher education, studying the case of Unemat, the data and information collected about its expansion process and the studies on the profile of entrants to this HEI, showed that, in relation to admission, the institution has been fulfilling its mission of having democratic entry and leads us to conclude that its expansion had a democratized process, even if without explicit intention in documents. The democratization that allowed the entry of traditional and diverse populations emerged from the local reality, regional contexts and the needs of the community where Unemat is located, although at times in an unplanned way and without any intention of implementing national policies. Research has shown that at Unemat there was democratization primarily through access conceived only as entry. Despite allowing entry to all classes, peoples and races without distinction, the problem of permanence is increasingly evident.

Based on the results of the research carried out by the group and the questions raised, this study emerged with the aim of understanding the student assistance policy of the State University of Mato Grosso (Unemat) and analyzing how it is configured and/or being implemented as a policy of permanence. To this end, we analyzed Resolution nº 019/2013–CONSUNI that creates the PAE - Student Assistance Program, as well as Resolutions nº. 020/2013-CONSUNI and 021/2013-CONSUNI and the results of the student selection notices for housing and food assistance, in the period 2013-2014 and 2015.

We verified that the PAE-Unemat aims to provide financial support to students on undergraduate courses, with proven socioeconomic vulnerability, the big question that arises for this study concerns: are these student assistance policies being implemented as permanence or as a focal assistance policy that aims only to serve students with economic vulnerability?

2 CONTEXTUALIZATION OF UNEMAT

The creation of Unemat is portrayed by Rieder (2011, p.235) as a consequence of the internalization process of the Federal Universities of Pelotas
(UFPeL), the Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT), the Fundação Universidade de Rio Grande (FURG) and of the Catholic University of Pelotas (UCPeL) and the implementation, in July 1973, of an advanced Rondon Project campus in the municipality of Cáceres. The author states that the demands for the provision of courses and the qualification of teachers were materialized in 1977, through the municipal executive to the rectors of extension universities, mediated by the then Director of the Advanced Campus of Cáceres, beginning the process of creating the Institute of Higher Education of Cáceres – IESC, which materialized on July 20, 1978, through Municipal Law No. 703. On the same date, the Municipal Council of Cáceres authorized the executive branch to create the Institute of Higher Education of Cáceres, linking -o, through Decree no. 190, to the Municipal Department of Education and Social Assistance.

From its creation as an Institute to its accreditation as a University, Unemat's history records different moments in the search for consolidation as a Higher Education institution. In this history we find mobilizations in favor of the takeover of the Institute by the Federal University of Mato Grosso, demonstrating different interests between institutional authorities and pro-federalization protesters and vice versa: “For the former, federalization meant the rupture of norms that, in this case, they do not offer any opportunities to dare; while for those who experience the institution, federalization means the overcoming of obstacles and a new era in institutional relations” (ZATTAR, 2008, p.53).

Unemat also followed the relaxation of legislation that 'regulates' Higher Education at a national level, going through different statuses of academic-administrative organization. Through State Law No. 4,960, of 12/19/1985, the IESC was incorporated into the Fundação Centro Universitário de Cáceres (FCUC), linked to the State Department of Education, making the maintenance of its activities the responsibility of the State.

On July 17, 1989, in response to an opinion from the Federal Council of Education, State Law No. 5,495 was published (amending Law No. 4,960/85), changing the name of the Centro Universitário de Cáceres to the Fundação Centro de Higher Education of Cáceres (FCESC). The process of expanding the
IES also began, being held from December 11 to 13, 1990, the “I Seminar on the Expansion of Higher Education in Mato Grosso”.

For Rieder (2011, p.237), the holding of the 1st Expansion Seminar aimed to “strengthen the political support of the Institution at the state level, as in this sense it was fragile and could justify arguments for its extinction”. For the author, having the headquarters in Cáceres and meeting only part of the demand from students in the Southwest region of MT was not enough to provide political stability and consistency within the Legislative Assembly.

The movement towards the expansion of the institution to other regions of the State, driven by the political class and educational leaders, increased the state political support necessary for the creation of a new organizational structure. In January 1992, through Complementary Law No. 14, the Fundação Centro de Ensino Superior de Cáceres changed its name to the Fundação de Ensino Superior de Mato Grosso (FESMAT), maintaining its link to the State Department of Education. In March of that same year, the Regional Centers of Alta Floresta, Nova Xavantina, Alto Araguaia and Pontes e Lacerda began operating. Also in July 1992, the Luciara Center began offering courses in the form of full degrees in installments.

In December 1993, through Complementary Law No. 30, FESMAT became the University of the State of Mato Grosso – Unemat. The Tangará da Serra Campus was acquired by the State from a private group and incorporated into Unemat in April 1995 and in 2013 we had the Nova Mutum and Diamantino campuses taken over.

Since its creation, Unemat has been adopting different and innovative ways of offering undergraduate courses: face-to-face courses with continuous offerings, offered during the day (morning, afternoon and full-time) and evening periods; blended courses (degrees in installments aimed at training in-service teachers, program of thematic modules); distance learning courses, off-site courses, courses for people from social movements (Pedagogy course for

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2 The organizational structure of the IES was changed by Decree nº. 1,236, dated 02/17/92, and implemented in May 1993.
agrarian reform teachers, CPERA and Agronomy course for rural social movements, CAMOSC - single classes); specific courses aimed at qualifying teachers from state and municipal education networks and other professionals in different areas of training (full degree courses/graduation for teachers with short degree training), in addition to actions to include specific social groups such as indigenous people (Indigenous 3rd Degree Project, later transformed into the Indigenous Intercultural College), black people (quotas through the Ethnic-Racial Integration and Inclusion Program) and other less assisted communities in the interior of Mato Grosso.

The expansion of Unemat occurred with the perspective of being a University ‘from the interior to the interior’ and with the aim of serving a population that is geographically without access to higher education centers. In the words of Zattar (2008, apud Rieder 2011, p. 229), “Unemat is consolidated”. Currently, the IES offers 60 in-person undergraduate courses, in addition to undergraduate courses in installments and distance learning and lato sensu and stricto sensu postgraduate courses.

3 UNEMAT ACCESS POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

Admission to Unemat undergraduate courses, until 2012/2, always occurred via the Entrance Exam, even when the selection process was intended to serve a specific clientele, as in the case of courses for training indigenous teachers or in the Bachelor's degree modality. Full Installments. The actions, programs and access policies to Unemat, described in this text, refer to the forms of admission to the Institution's undergraduate courses, privileging affirmative action policies for black people and students from public schools.

The selection process for admission to Unemat is carried out by the Coordination of Competitions and Entrance Exams (COVEST), a unit administratively linked to the Dean of Undergraduate Education (PROEG).
From 2013/1 onwards, in the first semester of each year, the IES starts to adopt the Unified Selection System – Sisu as a form of admission and, as a selection criterion, the score obtained by the candidate in the National Secondary Education Examination – ENEM. To enter the second academic semester, the traditional Entrance Exam is held.

In addition to these forms of entry, Unemat also carries out selection processes by appointment; face-to-face calls and simplified notices and also publishes specific notices to fill remaining vacancies.

Until the first semester of 2005, places on UNEMAT undergraduate courses were only offered in broad competition. From the second semester of that year, with the creation and implementation of PIIER, through Resolution No. 200/2014-CONEPE, 25% of the total vacancies offered in all IES courses began to be allocated to self-declared black candidates (black or brown), according to criteria adopted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE. In chapter II of this Resolution, in article 8, which deals with permanence, it was established that: “Unemat must implement an academic support program for all students who demonstrate difficulties in following the subjects, regardless of their option regarding the provisions of article 1 of the Resolution” (emphasis added). However, from 2004, when the PIIER was approved, until approximately 2013, student retention policies at Unemat were practically restricted to the granting of scholarships (in the modalities of support, extension and scientific initiation), with only the university campuses Pontes e Lacerda, Alto Araguaia and Nova Xavantina have student housing, and on none of the campuses does the IES have a University Restaurant.

Unemat complies with legislation regarding the provision of human resources to support students with special needs, such as reader/transcriber, LIBRAS interpreter, companion for wheelchair users or physically disabled people.

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Like other state universities, Unemat still does not have direct access to federal resources, except through specific notices and programs, such as Pnaest 4.

Only in 2012, the Dean of Student Affairs (PRAE) was created in the organizational structure of the IES, promoting the implementation of policies aimed at the needs of students, such as the creation of the Student Assistance Program – PAE, approved by Resolution no. 019/2013- from the University Council - CONSUNI. The PAE is made up of a set of actions: support grant 5; food assistance 6; housing assistance 7 and publication/representation assistance 8. In this article we will focus on the analysis of the so-called ‘food aid’ and ‘housing aid’, components of the PAE and regulated, respectively, by CONSUNI Resolutions no. 020/2013 and 021/2013.

4 UNEMAT’S HOUSING AND FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS: PERMANENCE OR FOCUSED ASSISTANCE?

The Student Assistance Program – PAE/Unemat, established through Resolution no. 019/2013-CONSUNI-UNEMAT, aims to “provide financial support to regular students of Unemat undergraduate courses, with proven socioeconomic vulnerability, promoting better conditions for completing courses”.

4As of 2013, with the adhesion to Sisu, Unemat began to have access to resources from federal programs such as Pnaest - National Student Assistance Program for state public higher education institutions, established by Normative Ordinance nº. 25, of December 28, 2010.
5Financial support for students with socioeconomic needs who will carry out activities that contribute to their training and professional development, aiming at these students’ permanence in Unemat's undergraduate courses, overcoming the lack of training in primary and secondary education, enabling them to achieve better academic and professional qualification.
6Financial support aimed at meeting the dietary needs of students regularly enrolled in undergraduate courses at Unemat, with proven socioeconomic vulnerability duly approved in a specific selection.
7Financial support aimed at guaranteeing housing for students, with proven socioeconomic vulnerability, who live outside the home of their parents, guardians or equivalent, to carry out their studies.
8Financial support for the participation of Unemat students, who intend to publish and/or present work in technical-scientific events, which are not foreseen as a mandatory activity of the scholarship modality, and of representatives of student entities from in-person undergraduate courses in events outside from Unemat, in didactic-scientific and political-academic exchange activities of regional and national scope, in locations other than the Campus where your course originates.
The PAE is coordinated by the Dean of Student Affairs – PRAE with resources provided for in the Institution's annual budget and also with resources coming from the National Student Assistance Program for State Public Higher Education Institutions, arising from adherence to the Selection System Unified – Sisu, from the Ministry of Education – MEC.

The student benefiting from any modality of the Student Assistance Program cannot have an employment relationship with the IES, however, the selected student is allowed to accumulate housing and food assistance; housing or food assistance and a scholarship or even publication/representation assistance and any other types of assistance or scholarship, subject to specific resolutions.

The food aid, approved by Resolution no. 020/2013-CONSUNI-UNEMAT, consisted of a financial contribution intended to assist with the dietary needs of students regularly enrolled in undergraduate courses at Unemat, with proven socioeconomic vulnerability.

Housing assistance is the financial contribution intended to help cover housing costs for students, with proven socioeconomic vulnerability, who live outside the home of their parents, guardians or equivalent, to carry out their studies.

The resolutions that establish housing and food assistance mention that they aim to provide assistance to students, aiming for their stay at the university, minimizing situations of socioeconomic vulnerability that compromise the completion of the undergraduate course in appropriate conditions. (emphasis added).

To apply for food assistance, the student must be regularly enrolled in an undergraduate course at Unemat, cannot have completed another degree, the total per capita family income must be up to one and a half minimum wages; cannot have an employment relationship and must present at least 80% (eighty percent) of the number of credits of the subjects already taken, respecting their academic semester.
To access housing assistance, the student must complete the Socioeconomic Form available on the PRAE page and present supporting documents; have regular enrollment in an undergraduate course at UNEMAT; not have completed another undergraduate course; reside in a city other than that of their parents, guardians or equivalent, to carry out their studies; belong to a family with a total per capita income of up to one and a half minimum wages; not have an employment relationship and present at least 80% (eighty percent) of the number of credits of the subjects already taken, respecting their academic semester.

The selection of students to grant food and housing assistance is done through a notice published by PRAE and comprises three phases: filling out the socioeconomic form online, delivering supporting documents and interview.

Food and housing allowances are granted per academic semester, and may be renewed for the same period, if the student does not fail more than 20% (twenty percent) of the total subjects taken during the grant period; have not requested to withdraw from enrollment and have declared that they do not have an employment relationship.

The number of grants to be granted per academic semester is established in the selection notice, published annually, in accordance with the University's budget availability.

Analyzing the data made available by PRAE on food and housing aid, it can be seen that during the study period, two notices were published for the granting of these aids. The first, with the aid valid for the months of November 2013 to October 2014 and the second for the months of May to December 2015.

In both notices, the value of housing and food allowances was established, respectively, at R$ 250.00 (two hundred and fifty reais) and R$ 180.00 (one hundred and eighty reais), and candidates could claim both types of aid as long as they did not have any other type of scholarship or paid internship offered by Unemát or external funding agencies.
Notice No. 03/2013/PRAE offered 2,000 grants, 1,000 housing grants and 1,000 food grants, with the places divided proportionally using the number of courses on the 10 campuses that the institution had at the time as a parameter.

Notice No. 001/2015/PRAE offered 960 grants, 480 housing grants and 480 food grants, with the vacancies being offered using the same criteria for dividing the vacancies, however, now distributed among the courses on 12 campuses of the institution.

We verified that not all the aid granted in any of the notices was “used”. As for housing assistance, 78.4% of the assistance offered in the first period (2013-2014) and 67.5% in the second (2015) were “used”. Thus, the amount of “idle” aid was in the order of 21.6% and 32.5%, respectively.

Of the 784 students who benefited from housing assistance, 16 withdrew, that is, 2.04% of the concessions were not used during the entire period of validity of the first notice. In the second year (2015), of the 324 students who benefited from housing assistance, 41 of them did not use the assistance in full, totaling 12.65% of dropouts.

We can observe this data in the graphs below. In Graph 1, we observe the amount of housing assistance that was made available “offered” (Ofertados), the amount of assistance “used” (Utilizados), assistance that was not used “idle” (Ociosos) and those that were not fully used “withdrawn” (Desistentes).
Graph 1: Quantity of housing aid (offered, used, idle and withdrawn) referring to notices published in 2013/2014 and 2015.

In Graph 2, below, we can see the percentage of housing aid that was “used” (Utilizados), “idle” (Ociosos) and “withdrawn” (Desistentes) in the two periods analyzed.

Graph 2: Percentage of housing aid (used, idle and abandoned) referring to notices published in 2013/2014 and 2015.

As for food assistance, in the first offer (2013-2014), of the 855 students who benefited, 38 withdrew, that is, the concessions were also not fully used.
during the period. In the second notice (2015), of the 368 students who benefited, 54 withdrew and did not fully use the aid, as can be seen in Graph 3.

Graph 3: Quantity of food aid (offered, used, idle and withdrawn) referring to notices published in 2013/2014 and 2015.

When we consider these data as a percentage, we can see the “use” of 85.5% and “withdrawal” of 4.44% of food aid offered in the first period (2013-2014) and 76.67% of “use” and 14.67% “withdrawal” in the second offer (2015). Thus, the amount of “idle” food aid was in the order of 14.5% and 23.33%, respectively, as seen in Graph 4.
The data in graph 4 also reveals that of the total food aid made available, a total of 14.5% of the aid in the first period (2013/2014) and 23.33% in the 2015 period remained idle. There is an objective observation that even though the amount of aid made available between the two offers decreased, in percentage terms the amount “used” decreased and “withdrawal” increased.

When analyzing the data on housing and food aid, we can infer that either the selection criteria are very strict and cover a smaller portion of students than predicted by the amount of aid available, or the value of the aid is not attractive enough, leading to students to seek other forms of subsidy.

The amounts granted through aid are even lower than what students can perceive with jobs in commerce (stores, bakeries, supermarkets) and in the formal market in general, which leads them to face a working day of up to more than 8 hours daily, harming and distancing them from academic life, in favor of a higher remuneration. This situation leads us to state that housing and food aid are not fulfilling the objective of solving the problem of economic vulnerability that they propose, nor are they being an effective mechanism that allows students to feel integrated into academic life.
5 OPENING THE DEBATE SO AS NOT TO CONCLUDE

Research carried out shows that higher education democratization policies have prioritized expansion through the expansion of places and forgotten that, through the same door that students are entering, they are also leaving without completing the course. Permanence policies have not kept pace with entry policies.

The documentary and data analyses, presented in this study, demonstrate that there are still no mechanisms at Unemat for academic monitoring of students who benefit from aid. Therefore, there is still no permanence policy in place, but rather an assistance program for economically disadvantaged students, through the provision of aid. It became clear that not even this objective is being achieved in its entirety; inefficiency that is proven by the non-fulfillment of the scholarships offered and the high number of dropouts. We can say that focal assistance policies are fundamental and essential for low-income people, but they have not solved the problem of permanence.

This study raises other questions that must be further explored in its continuity, such as: analyzing, comparatively, the performance and academic flow of students who benefit from aid and those who do not enjoy these benefits; the reasons that lead the benefited students to give up the aid; how Unemat monitors the student trajectory of the benefited students and, also, what PRAE conceives as a student retention policy. These and other problems are part of the continuity of this study.

Studying permanence leads us to think about academic dynamics, in a context that can provide opportunities for students to participate in teaching-qualifying actions, linked to any of the axes that support the university (teaching, research and extension). The inclusion of students in these actions is of great value for their retention in this space and this involvement can guarantee their permanence.
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