









THE TRAJECTORY OF THE QUOTA POLICY AT UFBA: IMPLEMENTATION, ACCESS, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE¹

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the trajectory of the quota policy at the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA), considering its impacts on student access and academic performance. From this perspective, we investigate the developments stemming from the implementation of the reserved vacancies policy at the institution since 2005, with a particular focus on the admission of public school graduates and self-declared Black and Brown students. Methodologically, this is a qualitative bibliographic study. The main results indicate a significant increase in students from public secondary education and in Black students enrolled in UFBA's higher education programs during the post-quota period. Student profiles in high-prestige programs, such as Medicine and Law, were significantly altered after the introduction of quotas. Analyses of academic performance generally reveal higher scores for non-quota students. However, throughout their university education, quota students have succeeded in reducing score disparities across all fields of knowledge, even surpassing them in Area IV (Languages) and Area V (Arts).

Keywords: Access; Academic performance; Higher Education; Quota policy; UFBA.

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THE TRAJECTORY OF THE QUOTA POLICY AT UFBA: IMPLEMENTATION, ACCESS, AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Abstract: This article aims to analyze the trajectory of the affirmative action policy at UFBA, considering its impacts on students' access and academic performance. From this perspective, we investigate the developments resulting from the implementation of the quota system at the institution since 2005, with a particular focus on the admission of public school graduates and self-declared Black and Brown students. Methodologically, this is qualitative bibliographic research. The main results indicate a significant increase in the number of students from public high schools and Black students in UFBA's higher education programs in the post-quota period. The student profiles in high-prestige programs, such as Medicine and Law, were significantly altered after the implementation of quotas. Analyses of academic performance reveal generally higher scores for non-quota students. However, throughout their university education, quota students have managed to reduce the score differences across all fields of knowledge, even surpassing them in Area IV (Languages) and Area V (Arts).

Keywords: Access; Academic performance; Higher Education; Affirmative action policy; UFBA.

O PERCURSO DA POLÍTICA DE COTAS NA UFBA: IMPLEMENTAÇÃO, ACESSO E DESEMPENHO ACADÊMICO

Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar o percurso da política de cotas na UFBA, considerando os impactos no acesso e no desempenho acadêmico dos estudantes. Nessa perspectiva, investigamos os desdobramentos decorrentes da implementação da reserva de vagas na instituição a partir de 2005, com foco especial na admissão de egressos da escola pública e autodeclarados pretos e pardos. Metodologicamente, trata-se de uma pesquisa bibliográfica de natureza qualitativa. Os principais resultados indicam um aumento significativo de estudantes provenientes do ensino médio público e de estudantes negros nos cursos superiores da UFBA no período posterior às cotas. Os perfis estudantis nos cursos de alto prestígio, como Medicina e Direito, foram modificados significativamente após a instauração das cotas. As análises sobre o desempenho acadêmico revelam, em geral, melhores pontuações para os não beneficiários das cotas. No entanto, ao longo da formação universitária, os estudantes beneficiários das cotas têm conseguido reduzir as diferenças entre as pontuações em todas as áreas do conhecimento, chegando a superá-las nas áreas IV (Letras) e V (Artes).

Palavras-chave: Acesso; Desempenho acadêmico; Ensino Superior; Política de cotas; UFBA.

Introduction

The demand for affirmative action in public higher education emerged from a long process of struggle by the black movement in Brazil. By breaking the myth of racial democracy (Santos, 1985) and denouncing the consequences of racism on the socioeconomic and educational conditions of the black community, black social movements called for concrete measures to reduce inequalities. As a result, universities implemented systems of reserved places for public school graduates with specific quotas for black, brown, and indigenous people.

The first experiences with quotas appeared in the early 2000s, pioneered by the University of the State of Bahia (UNEB) and the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ) in 2003. In this context, in 2005, the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) adopted quotas by reserving places in undergraduate courses for self-declared black people and those from public high schools. According to Guarnieri and Melo-Silva (2017), between 2003 and 2005, about 14 universities had implemented quotas. In the same period, Queiroz and Santos (2006b) counted 16 institutions with the affirmative measure for entry into higher education courses.

As we can see, quotas gained space in universities, and their consolidation at a national level occurred with the promulgation of Federal Law 12,711/2012. With the Quota Law, as it became popularly known, all federal higher education institutions had to reformulate their selection processes, reserving 50% of their places in undergraduate courses to be occupied by quota students (Brasil, 2012). In this field, we highlight that UFBA preceded the Quota Law, being a pioneer in the process of providing university education also to historically discriminated groups.

Given this context, this article aims to analyze the trajectory of the quota policy at UFBA, considering the impacts on students' access and academic performance. To do so, we rely on bibliographic research (Gil, 1994), of a qualitative nature (Minayo, 2015), in order to understand the institutional reality from the writings about the affirmative policy. We seek to create an overview of quotas at UFBA, observing the implications, advances, and challenges faced. To structure the analysis, we organized the writing by considering two periods: pre-quota and post-quota, in order to understand the changes over time.

This article is part of the discussion agenda promoted by the Policy and Education Management Research Group of the Federal University of Bahia. The academic productions of these researchers have investigated the effects of the quota policy in higher education,

especially on the access of black people to universities. The writing is divided into seven sections: introduction; implementation of quotas at UFBA; democratization of access; pre- and post-quota periods; student profile; academic performance; and references.

The Implementation Process of the Quota Policy at UFBA

The implementation of the quota policy at UFBA reflects a movement aimed at democratizing access to higher education in Brazil. This policy arises from a process of social and political claims by the Black movement, which has gradually sought historical reparation, especially regarding education. According to Nilma Lino Gomes (2017), this movement was the main protagonist for affirmative actions to become social, political, academic, and legal issues.

The III World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Intolerance, held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, highlighted the need to adopt affirmative action measures for Afro-descendants in the areas of education and work (Santos, 2012). This milestone strengthened the fight for affirmative actions in Brazil. The proposal gained momentum with Bill No. 3,627, sent by then-President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva to the National Congress in 2004. This project established a Quota Reservation System for students from public schools, with sub-quotas for Black and Indigenous people, in federal public institutions of higher education (Brasil, 2004).

However, the affirmative policy was adopted in the country through initiatives by the universities themselves, based on the demands and pressures of the Black and student movements in the fight for racial equality and the end of racism (Santos, 2022). In this field, institutions essentially implemented two modalities of affirmative action: reservation of places (quotas) or a bonus⁵ on the entrance exam score. In this context, UFBA was one of the pioneers in implementing quotas, being the third federal university in the country to adopt the system (Santos, 2009). According to Feres Júnior, Daflon, and Campos (2013, p.10), almost all federal universities with affirmative action policies benefited from the Program to Support the

⁵ Extra points added to the final scores of selection exams for students with certain socioeconomic characteristics, at the discretion of each institution (Feres Júnior et al., 2018).

Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities (REUNI), which increases the number of places offered to students in undergraduate programs.

In the process of drafting the affirmative action proposal at UFBA, based on dialogue with different social actors, the Central Student Directory (DCE), at a meeting of the Council of Teaching, Research, and Extension (CONSEPE) in 2001, proposed changes to the entrance exam to be held in 2003. Among the requests was the reservation of 40% of the places for Black students (Brito, 2021). After the proposition, the Work Group (GT) was created, which would later be called the Pro-Quota Committee (Santos; Queiroz, 2012).

In 2002, the Center for Afro-Oriental Studies (CEAO) and the Black and student movements created the "Preliminary document for debate on the adoption of mechanisms to expand access and permanence for Black people at the Federal University of Bahia," requesting the constitution of a GT to debate with the Committee the percentage of 40% for Black students in the 2003 entrance exam (UFBA, 2005). The proposal was formalized during a debate promoted by the CEAO. However, only after the election of the new rector, Naomar Almeida Filho, was the implementation of the GT resumed (Brito, 2021).

In this direction, in October 2002, CONSEPE deliberated the constitution of the GT, which was integrated by: the rector, the pro-rector of Undergraduate Education, the director of the CEAO, and by representatives of the technical-administrative staff, students, and the commission formed to expand places (Santos; Queiroz, 2012). In 2003, the GT began to outline the proposal to be forwarded to CONSEPE and the University Council (CONSUNI) for approval in the 2005 entrance exam. In that year, the proposal called "UFBA Affirmative Action Program" was presented. The document contained data collected by the technical team of the Pro-Rector and the Selection Service in the period from 1998 to 2001, referring to:

[...] social origin (public school students) and racial/ethnic self-declaration in selection and classification. Refuting the idea that UFBA discriminated against poor, Afro-descendant, and Indigenous-descendant people in the selection processes, since a little over 55% of those applying for admission to the institution declared themselves Black or brown, and 1% of candidates self-identified as Indigenous, the document stated that about 40% of the candidates attended high school exclusively in public schools. [...] Between 1998 and 2001, the percentage of Black and brown people grew; however, this increase was in less competitive courses, while a reduction in the most competitive ones widened the "internal differentiation." The difference in competitiveness in the entrance exam, in the most sought-after courses, would determine exclusion (Santos; Queiroz, 2012, p. 44-45).

In this scenario, the proposal for inclusion actions at UFBA was structured around four axes: preparation, admission, retention, and post-retention (UFBA, 2012). With the goal of pressuring for the approval of the requests—such as effective student participation in the GT and the adoption of affirmative policies—students occupied the UFBA Rectory building in 2003 (Brito, 2021). On October 3 of that year, a calendar of debates was defined to involve the entire academic community in the decision-making process before the proposal was forwarded for evaluation by CONSEPE and voted on by CONSUNI.

As a development of this process, UFBA's "A Cor da Bahia" (The Color of Bahia) Program requested that the Rectory include the "color" item in the university's socioeconomic questionnaire. The proposal generated questions about the uses of this data. However, in response, the university's Legal Department issued a positive opinion with the recommendation that the institution could include color/race on its forms. UFBA, therefore, became the first public higher education institution to include the color question on forms for applicants and students (Santos; Queiroz, 2012).

The UFBA Affirmative Action Program was approved at a meeting held on May 17, 2004, with 41 votes in favor, two against, and two abstentions (Brito, 2021; Santos; Queiroz, 2012). Under Resolution No. 1 of 2004, the policy was implemented for the 2005 entrance exam, establishing a 45% quota of places for all courses (UFBA, 2004). The selection criterion was social (school origin), but there was a racial component. The distribution occurred as follows: 43% reserved for public school graduates (85% of these places were for self-declared Black and/or Brown students and 15% for self-declared white and/or East Asian students) and 2% for Indigenous students. There were also two extra places per course for village-dwelling Indigenous people and students from quilombola communities (Santos, 2013). In 2012, with the approval of the Quota Law, UFBA began to adopt the unified model for all federal institutions.

The democratization of access to higher education: impacts of the quota policy on the student profile at UFBA

We know that quotas are essential measures for the democratization of access to public higher education. The adoption of reserved places in undergraduate courses enabled socially expropriated groups—such as Black and poor people—to gain university seats. In the case of

UFBA, as evidenced, the reservation of places began in 2005. In this section, we highlight characteristics about the student profile of those entering the institution. The pre- and post-quota periods were observed in order to understand the impacts promoted by the affirmative policy at the university.

The pre-quota period: introductory analyses

According to investigations by Almeida Filho et al. (2005), in the years 2003 and 2004, prior to quotas, the rate of self-declared Black and brown students already exceeded 50%, while students from public schools were around 34%. However, these indicators did not reach all fields of study. Regarding ethnic-racial background, some high-prestige courses like Medicine, Law, Dentistry, Electrical and Civil Engineering, Psychology, and Architecture had less than 30% Black students. As for school origin, undergraduate programs in Medicine, Law, Dentistry, Speech-Language Pathology, Theater, and Communication had a rate of less than 10% of students from public schools (Almeida Filho et al., 2005).

An observation of the period from 2001 to 2004 shows that the number of self-declared Black people at UFBA increased from 42% to 57%. However, according to the authors, this increase was predominant in undergraduate teaching programs or programs of lower social prestige, such as History, Physical Education, and Library Science, for example. In contrast, Medicine and Dentistry had 29% and 23% Black and brown students, respectively. In these courses, the percentages of admitted students from public schools were 4% and 5%, in that order (Almeida Filho et al., 2005). In other words, there was a significant representation of Black people at UFBA in the pre-quota period; however, the distribution of these students did not reach the most competitive and prestigious courses.

We separate two examples. In 2004, Lordêlo investigated the Administration program based on data produced in the 1990s. In that undergraduate program, according to the author, 38.4% of students were white and 85.6% had attended high school in private schools. In addition, 40.5% of the student body belonged to families with an income greater than 20 minimum wages, characterizing it as “one of the most elite programs at UFBA” (Lordêlo, 2004, p. 199). In contrast, we have the undergraduate teaching program in Pedagogy. In this program, Lordêlo and Verhine (2001), for the same period, identified 62.2% of graduates from public high schools, with family incomes of around six minimum wages. In Pedagogy, the presence

of white people was 27.4%, identifying, at the time, a student body with a “distinct profile from the most competitive courses” (Lordêlo; Verhine, 2001, p. 69).

In this area, Queiroz and Santos (2006b) highlight that the number of white students was reduced over time. According to the authors, in 1997 (the first racial survey about the student body), the rate of white people was 50.2%, progressively falling to 44.2% in 2001, 40.9% in 2003, and 35% in 2004. In contrast, the rates of Black people increased, rising from 43% in 1997 to 51.4% in 2001, 55.4% in 2003, and 61.1% in 2004 (Queiroz; Santos, 2006b). Regarding the type of school attended, private schools predominated among entrants until 2004, representing 66.2% of enrollments, that is, two-thirds of the total.

The 2005 entrance exam: data from the first experience with quotas

The first entrance exam with quotas promoted significant changes in the UFBA student body. In 2005, for the first time, the number of selected public-school graduates surpassed those from private schools, at 51% and 49%, respectively (Queiroz; Santos, 2006a). However, given the social criterion of the quotas, ill-intentioned candidates attempted to defraud the system by providing false information about their school origin. As Queiroz and Santos (2006a, p. 66) highlight, “dozens of candidates from the private education system had declared on the entrance exam form that they were graduates of the public education system, which led the university to refuse their enrollment.”

When relating public school data to color/race categories, the authors observed that, among these students, 11.3% were white, 59.7% were brown, and 24.8% were Black. Of the private school entrants, white students reached 32.4%, brown students 55.1%, and Black students 9.0% in 2005. Regarding enrollment in prestigious higher education courses, Almeida Filho et al. (2005) point to Medicine, Dentistry, and Law, with rates of public school graduates above 43%, significantly surpassing the pre-quota period's rates, which indicated less than 10% participation in these careers.

From this perspective, Queiroz and Santos (2006b) contribute by detailing the presence of color/race in the mentioned undergraduate programs. Between 2004 and 2005, we had notable changes, such as in Medicine: white students dropped from 39.6% to 21.7%, brown students increased from 51.7% to 68.2%, and Black students decreased slightly from 6.7% to

6.4%. In Dentistry: white students went from 39.1% to 20.3%, brown students rose from 48.7% to represent 69.7%, and Black students also increased their percentages from 7.9% to 10.1%. In Law: white students were 44% and declined to 22.7%, brown students had 45.7% and were increased to 61.1%, and Black students also raised their percentages from 8% to 11.6% (Queiroz; Santos, 2006b).

In general, the adoption of quotas promoted important changes in the racial configuration of the UFBA student body. In 2005, self-declared Black and brown students came to show a rate of around 73.0% among approved students (Almeida Filho et al., 2005). In this scenario, we characterize UFBA's quota experiences as successful, as their main objective was achieved: to include more public school graduates and Black students in its higher education programs, bringing the student profile closer to the profile of Bahian society. This initial overview provides indispensable information for understanding the first impacts on the university.

In this context, it is worth highlighting the configuration of the Brazilian and Bahian populations in the period under analysis. According to the 2000 Demographic Census, conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE, 2000), the country's resident population was 169 million, with: 53.7% white; 38.4% brown; and 6.2% Black. In Bahia, the population was 13 million, with 60.1% brown; 25.5% white; and 13.0% Black. That is, in Bahia, more than 73% of the population was Black (Black or brown), and this composition of Bahian society was not reflected in the state's public universities, such as UFBA.

This mismatch between the racial composition of the Bahian population and the profile of public university entrants highlights the inequality in access to higher education, reflecting the historical barriers that limit the inclusion of Black people, especially in more prestigious institutions. According to analyses by the IBGE, through the 2006 National Household Sample Survey (PNAD), only 28.1% of young people aged 18 to 24 with a complete high school education were enrolled in higher education. However, this rate varied according to race and social class: while upper-class white people had a frequency 2.7 times higher than the national average, lower-class Black people were 0.4 times that average (IBGE, 2007).

This information confirms the necessity of quota policies in Brazilian higher education. In other words, it was necessary to align the demographic profile with the academic profile. The ethnic-racial diversity of the population was not reflected within the universities, and this scenario only truly began to change with the implementation of the reservation of places. The

following analyses focus on these impacts at UFBA, revealing the transformations that occurred at the institution post-quotas.

The post-quota period: student profiles in the trajectory of the affirmative action policy

The profile of UFBA students was altered by the introduction of quotas, as we have discussed. Generally, the literature has pointed to higher admission rates for non-quota students (Argôlo, 2017; Lago et al., 2014; Silva, 2021). From this perspective, based on the studies by Silva (2021), we observe the distribution of students throughout the policy, considering a 15-year cycle of quotas at the university. The data in Table 1, below, corroborates previous investigations, making it possible to understand the distribution of students.

Table 1 – UFBA student relation by quota category and year of admission (2005-2019)

Year	Quota category			
	Quota students		Non-quota students	
	N	%	N	%
2005	1396	44,2	1765	55,8
2006	1475	44,3	1855	55,7
2007	1466	43,8	1884	56,2
2008	1430	43,0	1899	57,0
2009	2016	43,0	2674	57,0
2010	2166	42,0	2997	58,0
2011	2033	41,1	2909	58,9
2012	1879	41,4	2665	58,6
2013	1712	44,6	2129	55,4
2014	1624	40,5	2386	59,5
2015	1895	42,8	2537	57,2
2016	1836	45,2	2226	54,8
2017	1952	46,4	2257	53,6
2018	1930	44,6	2396	55,4
2019	1867	44,6	2323	55,4

Source: Elaborated by the authors from the data of Silva (2021).

Regarding absolute numbers, we found the highest entries of quota students in the years 2009, 2010, and 2011, all with records above 2,000 students. It is important to highlight that, during this period, the course offerings at UFBA had already been expanded through REUNI. Among the measures adopted, the university created Interdisciplinary Bachelor's Degrees (Almeida, 2016), generating more enrollments. Returning to Table 1, with regard to the percentage analyses, the highest rates of quota students are found in the last four-year period, 2016-2019. In these years, quota students represented between 44.6% and 46.4% of the student body.

Conversely, it is also in this timeframe (2016-2019) that we identify the lowest percentages of non-quota students, with variations between 53.6% and 55.4%. The year 2014 holds the highest rate of these students: 59.5%. The observation of absolute numbers, in turn, reveals a greater entry of non-quota students between 2009 and 2012, with the presence of more than 2,600 students per year. We also verified that from 2009 onwards, the number of non-quota entrants always remained above 2,000, a configuration that does not occur in the quota student group.

To advance the analyses, we investigated admissions associated with the students' color/race. In this way, we systematized the data provided by the Pro-Rectorate of Undergraduate Education (PROGRAD), considering the period from 2005 to 2019. The results were grouped in Table 2 and present an interesting scenario regarding the impact of quotas at UFBA: in some years, we found a higher admission of self-declared Black students than white students. This admission configuration, as we discussed, was completely reversed in the pre-quota UFBA (Almeida Filho et al., 2005; Queiroz; Santos, 2006b).

Table 2 – UFBA student relation by color or race and year of admission, in percentage (2005-2019)

Year	Color or Race				
	White	Brown	Black	Yellow	Indigenous
2005	20,9	58,4	16,3	1,8	2,5
2006	22,7	55,7	17,4	1,4	2,9
2007	23,6	52,9	17,8	1,9	3,8
2008	21,9	52,6	19,5	2,5	3,6
2009	30,1	42,0	16,3	0,7	10,9
2010	19,1	46,7	23,4	2,6	8,3
2011	16,1	46,4	30,8	1,8	5,0
2012	16,1	46,4	32,3	1,4	3,9

2013	19,1	46,2	30,8	1,2	2,7
2014	26,5	43,6	24,3	1,1	4,5
2015	27,5	41,1	27,2	1,1	3,1
2016	28,6	44,9	25,4	0,8	0,2
2017	26,8	44,4	27,2	0,8	0,3
2018	24,6	46,1	27,9	1,2	0,3
2019	26,9	46,7	25,4	0,9	0,1

Source: Elaborated by the authors with data from PROGRAD.

We first directed our attention to the highest rates for each color/race category. In this regard, the highest rate for white people is found in 2009 (30.1%), brown people were most representative in 2005 (58.4%), Black people had the largest presence in 2012 (32.3%), East Asian people in 2010 (2.6%), and Indigenous people in 2009 (10.9%). Concerning white people, the data showed variations in admission over the years, indicating no predominance of students of this color/race in the institution. Among the three most numerous categories—white, brown, and Black—the rate for white people reached its lowest: 16.1% in 2011 and 2012.

Regarding brown people, until 2008, these students were the majority at the university, with percentages above 50% (Table 2). Subsequently, the rates decreased. However, the brown color/race remains predominant at the university. Black people, on the other hand, had their lowest participation in 2005 (the initial year of quotas), with 16.3%. However, in no other year was a lower percentage recorded. That is, as the affirmative policy advanced, the presence of Black people at the university increased, albeit with variations between years. Compared to white people, Black people had higher enrollment rates in 6 of the 15 years analyzed. East Asian and Indigenous people have a low demographic presence at the university, especially in the last four-year period. In 2019, for example, both categories did not represent one percentage point.

We also analyzed the students' school origin to perceive the entry of candidates from public and private schools. As expected, there are no quota students from private schools, given that the essential condition to be a quota student is to have completed high school in the public school system. We also observed the entry of students from federal public schools. This information was distributed by categorizing students based on their use of quotas for university access. Table 3, below, contains this information.

Table 3 – Distribution of UFBA entrants by high school type (2005-2013)⁶

Type of High School	Quota students		Non-quota students	
	N	%	N	%
Private School System	-	-	3142	84,3
Public School System	2030	84,8	549	14,8
Federal Public School System	365	15,2	147	3,9

Source: Adapted from Silva (2021, p. 95).

The group of non-quota students is predominantly composed of students from the private school system. When comparing the types of schools in this group, the numbers reveal that the number of entrants from private schools is 5.7 times greater than the number from public schools and 21.3 times greater when considering enrollments of graduates from the federal system. In this regard, the combined rates for public schools do not reach one-fifth of those admitted without quotas. Federal public schools, although fewer in number in both student categories, represent greater expressiveness among quota students, being, in absolute numbers, 2.4 times higher in this group.

Given the data and discussions in this section, we consider the impact of quotas at UFBA to be positive. The student profile was altered, both by the greater entry of public-school students and by the increased diversity of the racial composition of the student body, both aspects promoted by the affirmative policy. With the analysis over the years, we realize that democratizing access to higher education, in the case of UFBA, was an extremely successful measure, considering the concrete opportunities provided to historically discriminated groups. With access guaranteed, we will now discuss performance. Knowing elements of the academic trajectory of quota students is also a mechanism for monitoring the policy that can provide fundamental (re)directions.

The academic performance of quota and non-quota students: a focus on UFBA

One of the greatest attacks on quotas was the argument of a supposed decline in the quality of higher education (Queiroz; Santos, 2006b). Opponents of affirmative policies alleged

⁶ With the replacement of the entrance exam by ENEM, from 2014 onwards, information about school origin began to be stored by the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP).

that the reservation of places would allow unprepared candidates to enter undergraduate courses and, in this logic, the excellence of Brazilian public universities would be compromised. As we will see below, the trajectories of quota students have shown other results. In this section, we highlight academic research produced about academic performance at UFBA. We selected several segments in order to obtain an overview of the institutional reality.

The first post-quota studies at UFBA are from Almeida Filho et al. (2005). According to the authors, the entrance exam with quotas in 2005 had an overall average of 5.8 points, in which quota students achieved 5.5 and non-quota students reached 6.1 points. As we can see, the scores between the two categories of students were very close, with a difference of 0.6 points. However, in comparison with the years before quotas, the authors identified an increase in admission scores, thus, there was no decline in this indicator. Only in prestigious courses, such as Law and Medicine, for example, were the 2004 scores higher, but the difference was only 1.1 points (Almeida Filho et al., 2005).

In this regard, Delcele Queiroz and Jocélio Santos (2006b) also analyzed the student performance data in the first entrance exam with quotas. The authors confirm that the reservation of places did not have a negative effect, as alleged by defenders of meritocracy. On the contrary, when comparing the general admission averages for undergraduate courses, they observed an “expressive increase in the cutoff score”—reaching 33.1 points—refuting the idea that quota students (Black and public-school graduates) were unfit candidates for higher education (Queiroz; Santos, 2006b, p. 71).

In a later study, the authors examined the scores in the 2005 and 2006 entrance exams, observing the scores of the two student categories. In this analysis, we have new information. The performance differences pointed out by Almeida Filho et al. (2005) in Law and Medicine were reduced to less than one point between quota and non-quota students: 0.8 and 0.7 points, respectively (Queiroz; Santos, 2006a). In contrast, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering showed the largest disparities between students: 1.7 and 1.4 points, in that order, indicating advantages for non-quota students (Queiroz; Santos, 2006a). These initial investigations at UFBA are fundamental for us to understand how the adoption of quotas did not reduce merit; on the contrary, it provided an opportunity for the entry of prepared candidates who were previously excluded by the traditional entrance exam (Gisi, 2006).

The research by Lago et al. (2014) analyzed student performance in the period from 2010 to 2012 (prior to Law 12.711/2012). Initially, the authors examined the average admission

scores and obtained the following scenario: in 2010, there was a difference of 1,969.9⁷ points, indicating advantages for non-quota students; in 2011, non-quota students continued to show higher performance, however, the gap was reduced to 584.0 points; and, finally, in 2012 we have a reversal of this situation, and quota students achieved the best scores, showing an advantage of 926.2 points over those admitted through the open competition at UFBA (Lago et al., 2014, p. 269).

The performance coefficient (CR) was also evaluated. This indicator reveals performance over the course of higher education, on a scale of 0 to 10, based on the grades obtained in the courses taken. In this regard, the two student categories showed very close scores, and the differences were not very significant: 0.4 points (2010) and 0.1 points (2011 and 2012), in favor of non-quota students (Lago et al., 2014). Also concerning CRs, Peixoto et al. (2016) conducted an investigation considering the period from 2005 to 2012. From this conjuncture, differences began to be shown between students: non-quota students had superior performance by about 6.81%, with variations of 0.4 to 0.6 points (Peixoto et al., 2016).

When analyzing 16 semesters, the authors found better scores for non-quota students in 13, with exceptions only in 2005.2, 2006.1, and 2006.2, in which the scores did not show a significant difference in performance (Peixoto et al., 2016). Another advance in the investigations was to evaluate the scores according to the areas of knowledge⁸. The results indicated that quota students have better performance in the Arts area and in low-competition courses in the Humanities area. In contrast, non-quota students predominate in courses in the Health areas and in the most competitive Humanities courses, in addition to predominating in the Exact Sciences area.

These data confirm those found by Lago et al. (2014). The authors identified the largest performance differences between quota and non-quota students at UFBA in the Exact Sciences. A possible justification for this configuration is the gap in mathematics education in the public schools attended by quota students (Peixoto et al., 2016). Non-quota students continue with better grades in Health, and in the Humanities, "smaller differences are observed, despite

⁷ The UFBA entrance exam was divided into two phases, which could cumulatively reach 24,000 points (Almeida Filho et al., 2005).

⁸ A UFBA dispõe de cinco áreas de conhecimento, a saber: Área I –Ciências Físicas, Matemática e Tecnologia; Área II –Ciências Biológicas e Profissões da Saúde; Área III –Filosofia e Ciências Humanas; Área IV –Letras; e Área V –Artes.

including traditional courses like Law" (Lago et al., 2014, p. 272). In contrast, quota students predominate with the best results in the areas of Languages and Arts.

In this sequence, Caio Silva (2021) conducted more comprehensive research on the academic performance of students, covering the period from 2005 to 2019. The grades of students upon admission and at the end of their higher education courses were identified and analyzed to verify whether the performance differences remained throughout their education. The results are in line with previous analyses: in general, non-quota students enter UFBA with the best scores in all areas (Silva, 2021). According to Velloso (2009), this scenario is expected, and if students had the same performance in the selection processes, there would be no reason to have affirmative action.

Silva's (2021) observations contribute to the field by elucidating that at the end of the courses, there is no statistically significant difference between the performance of quota and non-quota students in the areas of Languages and Arts. Furthermore, the author brings a new highlight to the discussion: even though non-quota students have better grades in the Exact Sciences, Health, and Humanities areas, quota students managed to reduce the performance differences in all cases. That is, students who entered through quotas have been able to increase their scores over the course of their academic education, getting closer to the grades of non-quota students. The performance differences in the Exact Sciences area were 0.5 points, while in the Health and Humanities areas they were 0.3 points (Silva, 2021).

According to Peixoto et al. (2016), the phenomenon of academic performance is multifaceted, and therefore, disaggregated observations can allow for more detailed understandings. To deepen our analyses, we highlight specific cases in the Psychology and Pedagogy courses, considered high and low prestige, respectively, within the same area of knowledge. When evaluating student scores in Psychology, Argôlo (2017) found significant differences from the very beginning, indicating better results for non-quota students. Regarding the students' CR, the difference was 0.3 points, but statistical tests indicated that the difference persisted (Argôlo, 2017).

In Pedagogy, the scenario is completely opposite. In the analyses of this undergraduate program, performance differences showed little advantage for non-quota students, around 36.5 points in the entrance exam (Almeida; Silva, 2019). In contrast, at the end of the undergraduate course, the differences were completely eliminated, and quota students began to show a slightly superior performance compared to non-quota students, 8.6 and 8.5 points, in that order. In this way, we were able to verify that the aspects related to academic performance are very sensitive

depending on the choices made by the researcher, such as the methodologies employed and the segments.

In summary, the academic performances between quota and non-quota students at UFBA generally show better scores for those admitted through open competition. However, the scores of the two student categories converge during the formative journey, indicating that quota students manage to improve their scores from their experience at the university. Furthermore, we observed larger differences in Areas I, II, and III. These results imply and demand specific research in these sectors in order to investigate what the main challenges encountered by quota students are and the institutional strategies to solve them.

Final considerations

We consider that this article met its objective of analyzing the trajectory of the quota policy at UFBA. The impacts resulting from the affirmative policy were systematized, allowing for a historical understanding of the phenomenon. The advances and challenges were interpreted based on the results of investigations that evaluated the institution, especially the socioeconomic characteristics of its students. Thus, based on the discussions, we aim to provide a foundation for university managers to (re)think the directions of affirmative action.

In general, the entry of public school and Black students was expanded at UFBA with the introduction of the reservation of places in undergraduate courses. The analyses made it possible to visualize the institution's pre-quota scenario in which the enrollments of these students were reduced, especially in high-prestige courses. The first entrance exam with quotas, in 2005, already promoted changes in the composition of the student body, given the 45.0% quota established for the occupation of places by quota students.

In turn, observations in the first post-quota years indicated that the implemented measure would, in fact, democratize UFBA. Public school graduates began to occupy all courses, with significant representation among university students. Over the years, we were also able to verify changes in the racial composition of the student body, with a necessary shift: the data on the student profile came closer to the data on the Bahian population. That is, the rates with an overrepresentation of white people were reduced, while the rates of Black and brown people, previously underrepresented, were increased.

Regarding academic performance, one of the most controversial aspects in relation to quotas, the information has also been positive. It is known that quota students have gaps

resulting from precarious public education. These deficiencies are reflected in the scores obtained in the selective processes for admission to UFBA. However, the differences in initial grades are not maintained during the course of higher education. On the contrary, when compared to non-quota students, quota students have been able to raise their scores and reduce the differences in all areas of knowledge. As we have demonstrated, depending on the course, the performance of quota students is superior.

Finally, we emphasize that we are facing a new phase of the quota policy. In 2023, the Quota Law was amended through Federal Law 14.723 (Brasil, 2023). The reformulation seeks to include more segments, such as quilombolas and people with the lowest family incomes. Furthermore, at this stage, new demands for affirmative policies arise, such as inspection and control mechanisms. Thus, we encourage continuous investigations for detailed monitoring of the policy in order to produce knowledge that will support future decisions, creating strategies for the reduction of inequalities among students and in society as a whole.

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