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EDUCATION, RACIAL RELATIONSHIPS AND AFFIRMATIVE ACTIONS: AN ANALYSIS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF MARANHÃO, CAMPUS SÃO LUÍS

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze the perceptions of black students regarding the choice of the undergraduate course and the racial quota system in the perspective of affirmative action. The results presented and analyzed here show that black students have entered the university through racial quota policies. The qualitative approach with an exploratory strategy was used as a method, considering its limits, challenges and necessary criteria for the construction of an education that contemplates race relations and the inclusion of black people in the public university, where the results were analyzed. legal provisions that corroborate and legitimize the central existence of this dialogue. The reference authors consulted were: Madeira and Gomes (2018); Munanga (2001, 2016); Passos (2012, 2015); Gomes (2008, 2017); Lopes and Braga (2007); among others. The reflections revealed that, despite the great difficulty regarding the selection process of the researched university, it can be seen that students are properly enrolled and distributed in all courses at Campus São Luís (object of the research). It was found that the majority of enrolled students are in the corresponding period of the course and although the interview was conducted with subjects from different courses, some characteristics are peculiar among quota students.

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INTRODUCTION

This text is the result of a study about affirmative actions as an educational policy that aims to include black students in higher education through the policy of racial quotas. Studies reveal that affirmative action policies in Brazil emerged with the aim of reversing a picture of social and educational inequalities that they were structured in the capitalist social formation, which corroborated for the maintenance of social places, silencing ethnic groups, strengthening racism and placing blacks on the margins of Brazilian society. In this sense, interventions were considered to democratize the access and permanence of subjects belonging to socially vulnerable groups and with underrepresentation in higher education, as university environments are characterized as a space of dispute

where it is possible to see inequalities. In this way, means were sought to solve this and other problems related to social and educational inequality, since it is evident and necessary to (re) discuss the role of the public university, as well as race relations in Brazilian society. In view of this, it started to discuss affirmative actions in Brazil, from the perspective of racial quota. According to Munanga (2016, p.191-192), "quotas represent one of the strategies of affirmative action and, when implemented, reveal the existence of a historical and structural process of discrimination that plagues certain social and ethnic / racial groups in society". Likewise, according to the aforementioned author, affirmative actions are very current in the history of anti-racist struggle and aim to provide discriminated and excluded groups with a different process, aiming to correct the disadvantages conditioned to the victims of racism and various forms of discrimination.

(MUNANGA, 2001, p. 31). Add to that, Passos (2015), in his studies, points out the social imbalances between whites and blacks in Brazilian society in the last decade, it is commented that such differences were long denounced by the black Brazilian movement, coming to be revealed in educational indices, as well as in data related to health, housing, labor market and poverty. Thus, according to the aforementioned researcher, it is impossible not to verify the structural racism that intensifies social inequalities in Brazil:

As a result, racism and racial inequalities are no longer marginal to receive systematic attention from intellectuals, government officials, social and political leaders, among others. In this regard, the logic of functioning of the Brazilian State is mainly strained by the black movement, which instigates the construction of a new agenda forcing political attitudes and public debates about racial inequalities in Brazilian society, especially in education. At the same time that racial inequalities are gaining ground in public debates and in the dissemination of social indicators, educational policies, considered universal, are questioned, since they fail to reach the majority of the black population. (PASSOS, 2015, p. 156)

Thus, with regard to the school process, the researcher Passos (2012, 2015) shows that the disparities between whites and blacks can be seen in the access, permanence and conclusion of formal educational trajectories, pointing out, in their studies, which elements external factors also interfere in the schooling of the black population.

In other words, Passos (2015) maintains that “failure, dropout, age-grade distortion; developed school curriculum; expectations regarding student performance; reproduction of racism in textbooks”, are presented as significant variables that can be used in analyzes which aim to understand the racial, social and educational disadvantages that fall mainly on the black population, thus legitimizing the importance of the existence of racial quotas from the perspective of affirmative actions in public universities. Add to that, having knowledge of Law number 9.295 enacted in 2010, which reserves at least ten percent of the vacancies in UEMA undergraduate courses, respectively, for students from indigenous communities and students self-declared blacks who have completed high school in public schools. (Art. 47, Law No. 9295 / 2010). This policy was implemented at UEMA in 2012, so it became necessary to develop a study, to verify and analyze the symbolic perceptions of quota students regarding the choice of the undergraduate course and the racial quota system in the perspective of affirmative action. For the development of this research, it was necessary to look at bibliographic and documentary sources, which supported and corroborated the construction of this work, thus tonifying the need for discussion on Education, Race Relations and Affirmative Actions. Authors who supported this research were: Madeira and Gomes (2018); Munanga (2001, 2016); Passos (2012, 2015); Gomes (2008, 2017); Lopes and Braga (2007), among others.

This article is based on the historical-critical perspective and divided into sections. It starts with the introduction, followed by the methodology and the results and discussion. Finally, the final considerations present perceptions, recommendations and suggestions for expanding the discussion on the theme of education and its interfaces with race relations and affirmative

actions for the entry of the black population in higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The investigative path for the construction of this study is of a qualitative nature, with an exploratory and descriptive strategy and was conducted based on the speeches of the interviewed subjects, referring to the symbolic perceptions about access to the university, choice of the undergraduate course, as well as about the affirmative action policy in the context of educational and racial relations. According to Prodanov (2013, p.24), the method is “a procedure or way to reach a certain end and the purpose of science is the search for knowledge”. In this sense, the perspective of analysis of this research is historical-critical because it deals with the recovery of past facts, which allow us to expand our knowledge to understand the reality, particularly of the black Brazilian population that has been suffering from the fruits of racism that structured politically and economically supporting the production and reproduction of social and educational inequalities. (MADEIRA; GOMES, 2018). When he referred to the exploratory strategy, at the beginning of the paragraph in this section, he was based on Gil (2010, p.27) when he states that it “provides greater familiarity with the problem, with a view to making it more explicit or to build hypotheses”, that is, the purpose of this type of research is the improvement of concepts. Likewise, when referring to the descriptive strategy, Triviños (1987) and Gil (2010) emphasize that these studies are not limited to data collection, ordering, classification; they can constitute variable relationships. In this type of study, the researcher needs to know the subject in order to analyze the results without personal interference. In order to achieve the indicated objectives and guarantee the achievement of greater veracity in the scientific process of the problem, the references that deal with educational and racial issues were examined with a theoretical investigative look, as it is related and is also a research bibliographic and documentary.

When referring to bibliographic research, Gil (2010, p.29) reinforces that it is organized “based on material already published. Traditionally, this type of research includes printed material such as books, magazines, newspapers, theses, dissertations and annals of scientific events”. The reference authors used were: Madeira and Gomes, (2018); Munanga (2001, 2016); Passos (2012, 2015); Gomes (2008, 2017); Lopes and Braga (2007); among others. Also in this line of exhibitions, it should be noted that documentary research was used to better understand the theme of this article as it constitutes a source with important information. About this type of research, it is understood that it is used in virtually all social sciences and constitutes one of the most important designs in the field of history (GIL, 2010). It was necessary to look at sources that substantiated and corroborated the construction of this work, as well as terminologies, historical landmarks that have already been discussed by the Brazilian black movement tonify the need to discuss racial relations and affirmative actions in public universities. This article is the result of research carried out for the construction of the course conclusion work in Pedagogy Graduation at UEMA, which had as its theme “THE FIGHT OF THE BLACK QUOTA FOR ACCESS AND PERMANENCE IN THE MARANHÃO STATE UNIVERSITY: an analysis with students enrolled in 2016 and 2017, Campus São Luís”. The present work arose from the question about the entry and permanence of students

in higher education, given that in order to conclude the graduation they face great social and educational difficulties.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Twelve (12) students regularly enrolled in the research participated/ in different undergraduate courses at the State University of Maranhão - UEMA. The names of the participants were kept confidential, therefore, during the analysis and for identification, we chose to name them: Students A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, L and M. In this way, students' narratives will be worked out that reveal divergent conceptions regarding the choice of the course and the perceptions about racial quotas for black students in public universities. In this sense, it is essential to point out that such conceptions are related to the construction or not of the identity of these students as blacks who were reached by the cruelty of racism that caused damage from non-belonging and / or ethnic recognition, which will be worked and discussed below in two thematic units:

1. The choice of course

With regard to the choice of course, students replied that:
In fact, in high school I had no idea what I wanted, everyone had it and I didn't, so much because I think I had no base from someone in my family who did it like that and because I didn't know a specific area for choose, I fell kind of parachute. (Interviewee A)

Well, Pedagogy was not my first option. I would really like to do Nutrition, but the opportunity came to study Pedagogy and my interest in the course came from the range of options and specializations in various areas we can work on. (Interviewee B)

A priori was not the desired course, my first choice of course was Law in a way also by influence, but also by liking the course, however throughout the course I have been enjoying the course a lot. (Interviewee C)

Yes, desired course. (Interviewee D)

It was not the course I wanted at first, I wanted to take Law or Architecture then I saw that it was very popular even doing for the quota systems so I went to my mother's dream who wanted to study Administration but I didn't do it because of her time Administration and I'm really enjoying the course. (Interviewee E)

Yes, I had already taken an administrative training course that led me to choose the course. (Interviewee F)

I thought it was very interesting, the course mirrored the person I am, I liked it very much and I found it very interesting. (Interviewee G)

My teacher who helped me make that choice, and I already wanted the course. (Interviewee H)

First it was not my first option, the first option was at UFMA Odontology, then I was researching Veterinary I liked it and put it here at UEMA. (Interviewee I)

Yes, affinity for the subjects covered in the course. (Interviewee J)

Yes, I am on the desired course. (Interviewee L)

Yes, professional improvement. (Interviewee M)

Analyzing the speeches of these students, it is noticed that there are some factors related to the choice of the course. Students B, C, E and I report that it was not the desired course, showing that the courses desired by these students still through the quota system are competitive. Therefore, the option of these was notorious was for courses "considered" of less competition. Regarding the choice process, Nogueira (2004) points out that it is evident that this "is associated with a set of perceptions such as beliefs and explicitly formulated values that are assumed in this process as knowledge that the individual sustains in relation to himself". Thus, candidates tend to choose graduation according to their demographic and socioeconomic profile.

This factor can be inferred:

[...] the choice of this individual is conditioned by his past trajectory and his current position in social structures. [...] the option for a given course is related to the socioeconomic profile, the school trajectory (it is also, in part, determined by the individual's socioeconomic position), gender, age and, in certain cases, the candidates' ethnicity. (NOGUEIRA, 2004, p.166)

Thus, still on the choice of the undergraduate course, Nogueira (2004) comments that the socioeconomic profile of the subjects is directly related to the choice of the course, even more if the candidates belong to the popular strata, another decisive factor pointed out by the author on the choice it is the lack of economic and cultural capital, which makes the subjects be cautious when choosing the course, opting, in this sense, for courses with greater ease of entry and with less social prestige. In addition, Coulon (2008 apud PASSOS, 2015, p. 172), adds that black students when they enter university deal with academic structures, such as the lack of cultural and symbolic capital. These, according to the author, are, metaphorically, the card for the opening of academic life that can lead these students to occupy sectors of privilege and power.

Still on the analysis of the speeches of the interviewed students, it is noted that students D, F, G, J and L are in the desired course. In this sense, quotas as an affirmative action corroborated for them to reach the desired course, allowing them to occupy a space of knowledge that enabled them to overcome other opportunities.

But one thing is certain, the blacks who will enter public universities of good quality through quotas will, perhaps, have a unique opportunity in life: to receive and accumulate scientific knowledge that will accompany them on their path of the struggle for survival. Despite the prejudices that will persist for a long time to come, they will be able to defend themselves better at the time of big bids and in public tenders, displaying a certain knowledge that they did not have before. Some doors will open easily, thanks to this acquired knowledge (MUNANGA, 2001, p.41).

As the aforementioned author points out, these students who are in the desired course may, from the chosen training, fight for other opportunities through the knowledge acquired at the university. In addition, it is expected that the others will also follow this trajectory. Analyzing student A's speech, a difficult experience is perceived, which generated a strangeness when choosing the undergraduate course, through what was placed. It is noted that the student had no support, family motivation to take the entrance exam, because before her, no member of her family attended an undergraduate course. This situation is commonly seen in the reality of students from the lower classes, these inequalities are products of the racist structure, added to social exclusion and socioeconomic and symbolic inequality, which affects the entire Brazilian population and, in a reserved way, blacks (MUNANGA, 2016).

2. Students' perceptions of the racial quota system

When students are asked what their impression of racial quotas for black students in public universities is. The following responses were obtained:

So I never stopped to think about it, but I think it's a way of also apologizing for everything that has been, for everything that we have been through. (Interviewee A)

It helps because we have more opportunities to enter a university and it is also an extra incentive for those people who are Afro descendants, who are like me quilombolas. (Interviewee B)

It is essential, it is something that should never be taken, it should only increase the number of vacancies, because it is our right, it is something that has been taken from us and has to be returned, it has to be ours and the more it does for us, the better. (Interviewee C)

That it seems that the person does not have the capacity to enter the College [...]. (Interviewee D)

I think it was the best thing they created, because not everyone can spend with the amount of points that the universal requires and the quota is much better. (Interviewee E)

Yes, I believe that there shouldn't even be quotas because if we are all the same there shouldn't be quotas. (Interviewee F)

I find it interesting, it helps a lot. (Interviewee G)

I think it's good, and that there should be more openings and opportunities for these people. (Interviewee H)

My impression is that there are still few vacancies for quotas. (Interviewee I)

Facilitator for entry to the University. (Interviewee J)

Interesting. (Interviewee L)

I find it very valid. However, I believe that there should be more dialogues and debates on this subject within the institution. (Interviewee M)

It was considered to present all the speeches on this theme, as they reveal divergent conceptions about racial quotas for black

students in public universities. Some students emphasize in their speeches a negative position regarding quotas, as can be seen in the impression of students D and F. It is noted that these, although they are quota holders and have entered through quotas, do not recognize that in Brazil there are populations historically excluded, deprived of rights and opportunities. This non-recognition is established through a process presented in Brazilian society by an elite considered white. According to Petrônio Domingues (2001), according to the myth of racial democracy, blacks and whites live in perfect harmony, without racial problems, enjoying equal opportunities for existence. It is added that the quotas are not established by the individual's lack of capacity, but by understanding that this individual did not have the same educational opportunities for students from the wealthy classes.

Meira (2011), comments that:

[...] the candidates approved in an entrance exam will be those who are better prepared for the exam, that is, those who have studied more, attended the best schools and had a better structure to learn what is required of them in the knowledge tests placed as an instrument of selection by universities (MEIRA, 2011, p.22).

Certainly, not all students have the same educational opportunity, with fair and adequate preparation for the entrance exam. Notably, students belonging to wealthy and middle-class families have greater conditions to carry out a selective than those from poor families. Therefore, it is noted that the quotas are not established due to the student's lack of capacity. Still in this perspective of analysis, it is worth reflecting, in the speech of student F, if in fact the principle of equality provided for in the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 provides in the caput of its article 5, which reads that "We are all equal before the law [...]". As was well commented by the aforementioned student, however, it is assumed that even in the face of such an article, not all social groups have obtained the historic opportunity to evolve within Brazilian society.

On the other hand, it was found that some students emphasized positive impressions about racial quotas, as can be seen in the statements of students A, B, C, E, G, H, I, J, L and M. Positions that portray quotas as repairing an oppressive past, as well as seen as a positive motivation for the Afro-descendant population, as pointed out by student B, there is also an important theme that needs to be further discussed within the university, more as pointed out by interviewees such impression reveals the desire to expand the number of vacancies, as well as the continuation of quotas for black students, as pointed out by interviewee C: *it is a right of the black population.*

Although as stated above, a right of the black population, there are opinions that quotas for blacks without merit criteria will cause low self-esteem in candidates who recognize themselves as such. However, according to Munanga (2001):

[...] nobody loses their pride and their dignity when they demand a compensatory policy in a society that, for more than four hundred years, delayed its development and hindered the exercise of its full citizenship. Since when does repairing the damage caused by centuries of

discrimination damage the dignity and pride of a population? Are Jews ashamed to claim compensation from Holocaust victims? Where are the pride and dignity of a society that continues to maintain an important segment of its population in conditions of stark inequality and that for many years continued to hide behind the cloak of racial democracy? Quotas will not encourage racial prejudices, as they are present in the social fabric and Brazilian culture. (MUNANGA, 2001, p. 40-41)

In this sense, it is essential to reflect on the black presence in the university as well as to take advantage of the potential of these students as transformers of an instance, which previously constituted a space for training professionals of the overwhelming non-black majority. (LOPES and BRAGA, 2007)

Thus, we consider, in consonance with Carvalho's notes (apud PASSOS, 2015, p. 165) that the blacks present in the public university strengthen the production of emancipatory knowledge, enabling a restructuring of the previously Eurocentric epistemologies that puts the black population in a position of subordination. In addition, black students in the classroom, staying at the university makes the institution have to rethink its social and educational role, while it is understood according to the teachings of Gomes (2017), that the educational field provides reflections when it appears that the right to formal education is a social right, which has been hard earned by the non-dominant minority groups in the country, a collective that, according to the aforementioned researcher, needs to face not only racism but also other confrontations in the context of a hierarchical society, patriarchal and capitalist.

Final Considerations

The information worked and discussed in the course of this text, although not tiring, allows us to make some considerations about what constituted this article, a research that materialized due to the struggle of the Brazilian black movement, a movement that was reconstructed at various moments in the history of this country, a powerful, emancipatory, demanding and affirmative movement (GOMES, 2017).

To think of educational equality for all layers of Brazilian society is to review the stark inequalities that are rooted in contemporary society that lives with the fruits of a segregating society that for a long time excluded the black population from basic rights for their support and existence. However, in the midst of all inequalities, it is clear that the black population is occupying spaces in other decades that have never been visited. This factor makes it possible to perceive the existence of thought organized by the black social movement that has corroborated the construction and effectiveness of inclusion of the black population in higher education. Thus, to explore these issues, it was verified how the process of inclusion of black quota students at UEMA took place, as well as the choice of the course and their perceptions about affirmative actions.

Contemplating the research analysis, it was found that despite the great difficulty with regard to the selection process of the researched University, it was possible to verify that the students are properly enrolled distributed in all Campus São

Luís courses, it was also found that the majority of enrolled students are in the corresponding period of the course.

It is also noted that, although the interview was conducted with subjects from different courses, some characteristics are peculiar among quota students. With the deepening of bibliographic, documentary and descriptive research, it was possible to realize that the difficulties for the black population are historical and present themselves in all sectors of society.

Even in the face of laws that support this population with a view to reducing inequalities, prejudice and discrimination still coexist in a masked way in the midst of society. However, in the inclusion practices of UEMA it was found that the barriers present themselves when students are facing the reality of the course, which, in this sense, requires prior knowledge from their students. Institutional intervention is considered in the reception, attendance and identification of problems related to social, didactic-pedagogical, socioeconomic, accessibility, health and well-being difficulties that make it possible to assist students in raising awareness of their problems or indigence as well as orienting them in the search for solutions that corroborate the permanence of black students in the university space.

Still in this sense, it is suggested the creation and consolidation of a Center for Afro-Brazilian Studies within the University, which focuses on teaching, research and extension in the area of Afro-Brazilian studies and affirmative actions in favor of Afro-descendant populations, as well as in the field of African History and Afro-Brazilian Culture studies. This is thought based on data from IBGE (2010), which reveal Maranhão as having one of the highest percentages of Afro-descendant population among Brazilian states. Activities with a behavioral focus are also suggested, as inclusion "starts from within" and is built on the basis of social awareness, the education system is devoid of professionals who work the real history of Brazilian society in this sense of the African population and of their descendants. In this case, it is necessary to retell the history of the black Brazilian population as descendants of a people that was not only a slave, but an essential agent for the construction of a Nation. It is of utmost importance to raise awareness and provide continuing education for these teachers, in order to have an adequate level of teaching and learning. In order that the teacher, as a mediator of knowledge, be able to perceive and work in the classroom the most varied cultures that present themselves at the university. It is believed that the concerns of this work bring revealing aspects to the academic environment concerning black students enrolled in the university and how the access and permanence of these students have been weakened by consolidated historical issues with inequalities that have been built since the arrival of the African population in Brazil.

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