Students with Disabilities at the Federal University of Pará: Difficulties and Suggestions for Improvement[1]

Alunos com Deficiência na Universidade Federal do Pará: Dificuldades e Sugestões de Melhoramento

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ABSTRACT: This study identified the socioeconomic and academic characteristics of students with disabilities at the Federal University of Pará, their difficulties and suggestions for improving accessibility. Fifty students answered the socioeconomic questionnaire and were analyzed through descriptive statistics. The offer of quotas, the academic support at the National High School Exam (*Exame Nacional de Ensino Médio* - ENEM) and the non-dropout and repetition were facilitating actions that contributed to the permanence of these students in the Campus. The Federal University of Pará needs to invest in research, monitoring and extension, planning financial support actions aimed at meeting the physical and material needs and improving the conditions of architectural accessibility. Appropriate knowledge can sponsor the planning of affirmative actions that favors the inclusion and well-being of these students.

KEYWORDS: Students with disabilities. Higher Education. Socioeconomic and academic characteristics.

RESUMO: Este estudo identificou as características socioeconômicas e acadêmicas de alunos com deficiência da Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA), suas dificuldades e sugestões de melhoramento das acessibilidades. Cinquenta alunos responderam ao questionário socioeconômico e foram analisados por meio da estatística descritiva. A oferta de cotas, o suporte acadêmico no momento do Exame Nacional de Ensino Médio (ENEM) e a não evasão e repetência foram ações facilitadoras que contribuíram para a permanência desses alunos no Campus. A UFPA necessita investir em pesquisa, monitoria e extensão, planejar ações de apoio financeiro voltadas a suprir as necessidades físicas e materiais e melhorar as condições da acessibilidade arquitetônica. Conhecimento apropriado pode patrocinar o planejamento de ações afirmativas que favoreça a inclusão e o bem-estar desses alunos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Aluno com deficiência. Ensino Superior. Características socioeconômicas e acadêmicas.

1 Introduction

The arrival of students with disabilities in regular schools in Brazil happened in a period still considered to be very recent, having as impetus the Brazilian Federal Constitution (1988)

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that already announced that no one due to his/her race, origin, color, sex, age or disability could be deprived of "access to the highest levels of education, research and artistic creation, according to the capacity of each individual" (p. 138). In this sense, the proposal for the inclusion of people with disabilities in Brazil has gained greater prominence since the 1990s, through international and national commitments such as the World Declaration on Education for All (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 1998), the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), the National Education Guidelines and Framework Law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* - Law no. 9,394, of December 20, 1996), the National Policy of Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education (*Política Nacional de Educação Especial na Perspectiva da Educação Inclusiva*, 2008) and, more recently, the Brazilian Inclusion Law (*Lei Brasileira de Inclusão* - Law no. 13,146, of July 6, 2015).

Such commitments interfere and favor the access of this specific group to Higher Education. According to data from the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira *(Instituto Nacional de Estudos e Pesquisas Educacionais Anísio Teixeira* [INEP], 2014), in recent years, in Brazil, there has been an increase in enrollments of people with disabilities in Higher Education, reaching 33,337 in 2014. Of these, 19,654 (58.9%) in private institutions and 13,723 (41.1%) in public educational institutions. Of the total number of students enrolled in public institutions, 10,602 (77.3%) were in Federal Institutions, 2,542 (18.5%) in State Institutions and 579 (4.2%) in Municipal Institutions.

Thinking of policies that directly benefit the student, the Federal Government created some programs that favor access to this level of education. The Accessibility Program in Higher Education, entitled *Programa Incluir* (*Edital* no. 4, 2008) - which is specific for people with disabilities and which aimed to foster the creation and consolidation of accessibility centers with spaces and qualified professionals, articulated between different university bodies and departments - the Program to Support Plans and Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities (*Programa de Apoio a Planos e Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais* - REUNI) (Decree no. 6,096, of April 24, 2007) and the National Student Assistance Program (*Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil* - PNAES) (Decree no. 7,234, July 19, 2010).

Despite all the support offered by laws, ordinances and affirmative action policies regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities in Higher Education and the increase in research on this topic (Mendes & Ribeiro, 2017; Torres, Caleiros, & Santos, 2016), some studies (Januário, 2019; Oliveira, 2011; Silva et al., 2012; Torres, Caleiros, & Santos, 2016) suggest that more research on this topic is missing, especially in the northern region of the country. In the study conducted by Mendes and Ribeiro (2017), the Northeast region maintains the highest proportion of research, with 44%, followed by the Southeast region, with 38%, the South with 16% and the Midwest with 2%. Januário (2019) found a concentration in the production of papers, theses and dissertations on the inclusion of students with disabilities in Higher Education in the Southeast, South and Northeast regions, with 14 works in the Southeast, 10 in the South and 7 in the Northeast defended and published. In the research conducted by Oliveira (2011), the works are concentrated in the South, Southeast, Northeast and Midwest regions, with the South region having the highest concentration of research.

In this sense, systematic reviews on the theme have been carried out in the last decade (Dussilek & Moreira, 2017, Januário, 2019, Mendes & Ribeiro, 2017, Oliveira et al., 2016, Oliveira, 2019, Silva et al., 2012, Torres, Caleiros, & Santos, 2016,) with the objective of knowing how the process of inclusion of these students in Higher Education is. It was observed that there is a mismatch between what the laws, ordinances, affirmative actions announce and the reality of these students, regarding the access and permanence of this public in universities.

Systematic reviews of the literature reveal that research on the access and permanence of these students in Higher Education in the North region needs to be developed in order to evaluate how the process of inclusion of this public in universities in that region is. Thus, this study is justified because it aims to expand information, specifically in Belém, state of Pará, Brazil, about the inclusion of students with disabilities in Higher Education, as well as to know their difficulties and obstacles encountered, the struggle and overcoming of these students when entering this educational level. In this sense, the objective of this study was to describe the socioeconomic and academic characteristics of students with disabilities enrolled at the Campus of Guamá at the Federal University of Pará (UFPA), in order to identify their perceptions regarding the difficulties encountered in the university context, knowing their suggestions for improvement with regard to physical, methodological, attitudinal, communicational, instrumental and programmatic accessibility.

2 Method

This study consists of a qualitative and quantitative research, of an exploratory, descriptive and inferential character to identify associations and similarities between basic characteristics of certain groups of participants. The cross-sectional method was used, data of which were collected over a period of time between the months of January and July 2016.

To carry out the research, 192 students with disabilities were contacted, with the following inclusion criteria being established: being a student with a disability from the undergraduate course, being regularly enrolled between the years 2012 and 2015, studying at the UFPA Guamá Campus and having difficulties in carrying out academic activities. As an exclusion criterion, being from another Campus, having canceled the course, not being a student with disabilities and not having difficulties or impediments to carry out their school activities within the institution were considered. Fifty students with disabilities who enrolled in UFPA's Undergraduate courses participated in this study.

Initially, contact was made with the General Directorate of the Center for Academic Records and Indicators and with the Accessibility Coordination at UFPA, requesting information regarding students with disabilities enrolled in the institution from 2012 to 2015. After the appreciation of the project, these units released a list with the name of 192 students, as well as the course, the year of enrollment, the type of students' disability, telephone contact and e-mail. With the authorization of the 192 students with disabilities who were contacted, 142 were excluded from the research for the following reasons: one student did not study at the Campus of Guamá, 66 students stated that their disability did not compromise them within the Campus and that they were able to develop their academic activities without any difficulty, 43 had problems with the contact made available, 22 canceled the course and 10 students did

not accept to participate in the study for several particular reasons. Thus, 50 students with disabilities agreed to participate in the study.

Data collection was carried out at the UFPA facilities, Campus of Guamá - Belém. This Campus is divided into four sectors: Basic, Professional, Health and Technology Park. Currently, the Campus has a population of approximately 21,325 undergraduate students, offering 86 undergraduate courses and 70 graduate courses.

The instrument used was a semi-structured questionnaire with eight topics prepared by the researcher, which sought to know the profile of the students with disabilities who studied at UFPA. The questionnaire was composed of two parts. The first consisted of questions with closed questions regarding the survey of socioeconomic and academic variables in the following topics: (1) identification (personal and academic), (2) characterization of the disability, (3) school trajectory (Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education and High School), (4) entrance exam/National High School Exam - *ENEM*[7] (pre-entrance exam, institution support during the exam, type of admission), (5) academic activities (leave of absence, failures, research projects, financial assistance), (6) family group, socioeconomic status, (7) alimentation and (8) transportation. To identify the disability of each participant, the item "characterization of disability" was elaborated with specific questions regarding the student's disability. The second part was composed of two questions, one objective and the other subjective. The objective and evaluation question, with five options of decreasing intensity, aimed to know the students' opinion about the accessibility conditions within the Campus of Guamá, and the subjective question sought to know the students' perception about the measures that UFPA should take to improve accessibility within the institution.

The research project was submitted to and approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the UFPA Institute of Health Sciences (CEP-ICS/UFPA), expressed in Opinion no. 855.169. In possession of the data made available by the Center for Academic Records and Indicators and the Accessibility Coordination, the General Directors of the Institutes were contacted to obtain authorization to reach the participants by telephone or e-mail. Once the necessary authorizations were obtained to conduct the study, the first approach with the students was via telephone or e-mail, through which they were invited to participate, interviews were scheduled and the questionnaire was applied.

Data collection took place between the months of January and July 2016 at the University's facilities, at a time pre-established by the participants so as not to interfere with their academic activities. At the beginning of the interview, each participant was informed of the general objectives of the study, the invitation to participate was formalized and the Informed Consent Form was signed, guaranteeing the voluntary participation, the confidentiality and anonymity of these students. The completion of the instruments took approximately 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted individually by the researcher. The answers were literally transcribed.

The analysis of quantitative data was performed with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 20 for Windows. For characterization and

[7] Note of translation: ENEM – *Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio* – is a national exam conducted by INEP to evaluate the quality of High School in Brazil. Its result permits the student access to Higher Education in Brazilian public universities.

description of the sample, simple descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were used, as well as measures of central tendency (mean). The qualitative data obtained in the interviews were recorded, transcribed literally and analyzed.

3 Results

The data obtained in this study were organized into three thematic axes: socioeconomic characteristics of students with disabilities at UFPA, academic characteristics of students by type of disability and evaluation and suggestions for improving accessibility for students with disabilities.

3.1 Socioeconomic characteristics of students with disabilities at UFPA

Table 1 shows the socioeconomic characteristics of students with disabilities with regard to the type of disability, gender, age, marital status, place of residence, with whom the student lives, school history, family income and personal income.

	VI (n=20)	PD (n=18)	HI (n=5)	SFD (n=3)	MD (n=2)	ASD (n=2)	Total (n=50)
Genre							
Female	9	7	3	1	2	0	22
Male	11	11	2	2	0	2	28
Age							
Average	23.1	27	27.8	20	25	24	24.4
Civil status							
Single	18	17	4	3	2	2	46
Stable Union	2	1	1	0	0	0	4
Place of residence							
MRB	20	18	4	3	1	2	48
Districts	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
Living with							
Family	15	14	4	3	2	2	40
Friends	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Alone	1	2	1	0	0	0	4
Spouse	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
School Record							
Public	11	7	4	1	2	0	25
Private	6	6	0	2	0	1	15
Both	3	5	1	0	0	1	10
Do not know	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Family income (minimum wage)							
1	2	1	1	0	0	0	4
1 to 2	7	9	2	0	1	0	19
2 to 3	4	4	1	2	1	0	12
3 to 6	1	1	1	0	0	2	5
6 to 9	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
> 9	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
Personal Income							
SP	13	11	2	3	2	2	33
IND	5	6	2	0	0	0	13
Other	2	1	1	0	0	0	4

Table 1. Distribution of socioeconomic characteristics of students participating in the research.
Legend: VI: Visually Impaired; PD: Physical Disability; HI: Hearing Impairment; SFD: Specific Functional Disorder; MD: Multiple disabilities; ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorder; MRB: Metropolitan Region of Belém; SP: Supported by Parents; IND: Independent.

The population consisted of 50 students with disabilities, 28 of whom were male (56%) and 22 were female (44%). There was a predominance of visual impairment (VI). The age range of students varied between 18 and 45 years, with an average age of participants between 23 and 27 years. Regarding marital status, 46 students were single (92%), of which 45 had no children (90%).

Regarding the place of residence, 40 students lived with their family (80%) and the rest with friends, alone or with their spouse. With regard to educational background, 25 students (50%) attended Kindergarten, Elementary and High School in public schools (50%), while the other 25 students attended Kindergarten, Elementary and High School in both private and public schools (50%). Regarding the family income and the students' personal income, 19 students with disabilities (38%) had an income of one to two minimum wages and 33 were financially supported by their parents (66%). Regarding the students' residence, 48 lived in the Metropolitan Region of Belém (MRB) (96%) and the others in the Administrative Districts of the Municipality of Belém (4%).

3.2 Academic characteristics of students by type of disability at UFPA

In Table 2, the academic characteristics of students with disabilities were listed with regard to the area of knowledge, the academic record, the type and category of admission, the support and types of financial aid, the assistance in entering the institution, the activities related to research, teaching and extension.

	VI (n=20)	PD (n=18)	HI (n=5)	SFD (n=3)	MD (n=2)	ASD (n=2)	Total (n=50)
Knowledge area							
Human Sciences	13	7	2	1	1	2	26
Exact Sciences	4	5	3	1	1	0	14
Biological Sciences	3	6	0	1	0	0	10
School Records							
Fail							
Yes	6	10	4	1	1	0	22
No	14	8	1	2	1	2	28
Leave of absence							
Yes	1	3	2	0	0	0	6
No	19	15	3	3	2	2	44
Type of enrollment							
Quota	16	16	5	2	2	0	41
Non quota	4	2	0	1	0	2	9
Category of enrollment							
Public network quota	1	1	2	0	0	0	4
PwD quota	15	15	3	2	2	0	37
Financial aid							
Yes	4	4	1	2	0	0	11
No	16	14	4	3	1	1	39
Types of financial aid							
PwD assistance	3	3	0	0	0	0	6
Permanence assistance	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Transportation assistance	1	1	0	0	2	0	4
Enrollment support							
Yes	14	13	3	2	2	0	34
No	6	5	2	1	0	2	16
Teaching. Research and Extension							
Projects	4	0	0	0	0	0	4
Monitoring	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Internship	1	2	0	0	0	0	3

Table 2. Distribution of academic characteristics of students with disabilities at UFPA.
Legend: VI: Visually Impaired; PD: Physical Disability; HI: Hearing Impairment; SFD: Specific Functional Disorder; MD: Multiple disabilities; ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorder; HC: Human Sciences; ES: Exact Sciences; BS: Biological Sciences; PwD: Person with Disabilities.

Regarding the data presented in Table 2, the presence of students with disabilities was observed in the three areas of knowledge offered by the institution, with more than half of the students enrolled in courses in the area of Humanities (52%). With regard to the academic record, 28 students never failed the undergraduate courses (56%) and 44 students never asked for Leave of Absence during their academic life (88%). With regard to the type of admission, 41 students with disabilities (82%) opted for the quota modality, of which 37 chose the category for People with Disabilities (PwD) and four the Public Network. Regarding financial aid, 39 students with disabilities (78%) did not receive financial aid from the institution. However, of the 11 (22%) students who were granted this benefit, five (10%) received PwD aid, four (8%) permanence, and two (4%) transportation.

In relation to the support offered to the student at the time of the national exam, 34 students answered that they obtained this aid (68%). The aid received mentioned by the participants referred to adaptable and accessible rooms, chairs and tables, overtime, extended tests, Brazilian Sign language interpreters, readers, Braille tests, enlarged screens, transcribers, monitors, inspectors, sunglasses and snacks. Despite the support offered at the time of the exam, 12 students felt the absence of more support and comfort when taking the exam (24%). They asked for more comfortable, adaptable chairs, expanded tests, Dosvox[8], trained readers, more time to answer questions, more suitable, accessible, cooler and quieter rooms and shorter tests. With regard to participation in research, monitoring and extension projects, only ten students participated in these activities (20%), two in monitoring, four in research and four in internship.

3.3 Evaluation and suggestions for improving the accessibilities of students with disabilities at UFPA

Table 3 shows the distributions of the evaluation of accessibility conditions in general and suggestions for improving accessibility conditions at UFPA.

	HI (n= 20)	PD (n= 18)	HI (n= 5)	SFD (n= 3)	MD (n= 2)	ASD (n= 2)	Total (n= 50)
Evaluation of general accessibility conditions at UFPA							
Excellent	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Good	3	2	0	1	0	1	7
Average	5	12	3	1	1	1	23
Bad	5	3	1	1	1	0	11
Very bad	7	1	1	0	0	0	9
Suggestions for improving the difficulties related to accessibility in general at UFPA							
Architectural Accessibility	20	18	5	0	2	0	45
Methodological Accessibility	8	3	3	3	1	2	20
Attitudinal Accessibility	5	8	1	1	0	2	17
Communication Accessibility	8	1	1	1	1	0	12
Instrumental Accessibility	3	0	0	0	1	0	4
Programmatic Accessibility	0	2	1	0	0	0	3

Table 3. Distribution of evaluation conditions and suggestions for improvements within UFPA.
Legend: VI: Visually Impaired; PD: Physical Disability; HI: Hearing Impairment; SFD: Specific Functional Disorder; MD: Multiple disabilities; ASD: Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

[8] DOSVOX is a computational system, based on the intensive use of speech synthesis, developed by the Instituto Tércio Paciti Institute of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, which aims to facilitate the access of visually impaired people to microcomputers.

In Table 3, it was observed that, on the one hand, 30 students with disabilities (60%) rated the accessibility conditions in general at UFPA as good or average; on the other hand, 20 students (40%) considered accessibility within the institution as bad or very bad. As for suggestions for improvements related to the difficulties arising from accessibility at the Campus of Belém, 45 students pointed to architectural accessibility, 20 to methodological, 18 to attitudinal, 12 to communicational and the others to instrumental and programmatic.

Regarding suggestions about architectural accessibility, most students (90%) considered it important and essential to install more elevators with audio, water dispensers at a height accessible to the wheelchair, lighting poles for the night audience, higher number of buses, restrooms adapted in all buildings and tactile floors throughout the institution. The repair and maintenance of the sidewalks, the tactile floor, the steps, the signage on the stairs, the access ramps with lowering of the guides and the covering of the walkways were also highlighted. The students emphasized that the trees should be pruned, the handrails equipped with protection bars, leveling the floors of the entrance or exit doors of the classrooms, more attention to the width of the doors in general and to safety during the night. In addition to these suggestions, they mentioned the concern with the movement of dogs within the Campus, as well as more investments in the Braille sector, in order to expand the services already offered by the institution and to invest more in the signage of the books of the Central Library. The University Restaurant should hire more professionals to assist students with disabilities when serving, and at the same time, help them from the moment they enter the room until the moment they leave the building.

As for the suggestions regarding methodological accessibility, 40% of students with disabilities found it necessary to invest more in the qualification of professors in relation to the teaching and learning process. They stressed that professors should use more audiovisual resources, take into account the type of disability in terms of time and method of exam evaluation, reduce over-reading, use more specific learning strategies for each special need. They also mentioned more offers of vacancies for PwD. In addition to these suggestions, the institution should offer more support in meeting special educational needs. The students understand that, in order to guarantee their permanence in the institution, each faculty must provide a service and/or support center, both academic and psychological, to assist them in the difficulties faced in the university context. For the participants, educators need to be more aware of the academic material and that it needs to be made available in advance for the student to follow the classes, thus allowing their insertion into teaching activities.

With regard to attitudinal accessibility, 36% of students with disabilities emphasized the importance of the institution in promoting more lectures on inclusive education for the academic community in general, thereby reducing prejudice towards this population; besides training professors and staff to deal with different types of disabilities. In relation to communication accessibility, 24% of students considered it necessary to invest more in resources and support to acquire learning. Offer more adapted material, copies with enlarged font, more rooms equipped with computers and projectors, more interpreters of Brazilian Sign Language and material in Braille. They also highlighted informative material in Braille, a website on the UFPA homepage to help students with visual impairment and use more subtitles in audiovisual materials. As for instrumental accessibility, 8% of students highlighted

more investments in didactic resources, such as, cursive writing grid, books in digital format, in audio, in Braille and with enlarged fonts. They also highlighted more technological resources, such as screen reader programs with speech synthesis known as Dosvox and Virtual Vision. Regarding programmatic accessibility, 6% of students mentioned that the Brazilian Standards (Brazilian Association of Technical Standards [ABNT], 2015) need to be followed. It is necessary to train both professors and employees at the UFPA Central Library to work with Braille, by investing in hiring more Brazilian Sign Language interpreters.

4 Discussion

This study revealed that of the 50 research participants, 28 are male students with disabilities, single, 27 years old average, live with their parents and are supported by them. As for gender, this data is no different from the data found in the studies developed by Chahini (2010), Duarte and Ferreira (2010) and Lima (2013), who, when carrying out their studies in relation to access and permanence of students with disabilities in Higher Education Institutions surveyed by the authors, they observed that the male student with a disability prevails. To Chahini (2010), this data may be related to the fact that the disability is greater in males or if this is due to a greater exclusion of females in this level of education.

It was noticed that most of the participants who joined UFPA are mostly students with VI (20) and students with physical disabilities (18). Of the 20 students with VI, seven reported that the accessibility conditions at UFPA are terrible and, as for students with physical disabilities, 12 mentioned that the accessibility conditions are average, that is, neither good nor bad. As for suggestions for improvements regarding architectural accessibility, both students with VI and those with physical disabilities were unanimous in presenting proposals for improvements in this dimension.

Of the 41 students who entered the institution through quotas, 37 entered by reserving seats for PwD. In July 2009, UFPA implemented its affirmative quotas policy for students with disabilities through a Resolution at the Higher Education, Research and Extension Council No. 3.883 (*Conselho Superior de Ensino, Pesquisa e Extensão* - CONSEPE), which reserves a seat in each undergraduate course, for addition to this population from the 2011 selection process (UFPA, 2009). In this regard, such a Resolution causes some concern with the need to prepare the academic environment to establish affirmative actions such as those of the *Incluir* and REUNI programs. The participation of these programs in the students' lives has contributed to numerous improvements and discussions of possible actions to be taken in favor of this population. Federal Universities receive the incentive from the Federal Government to adapt their facilities and, according to accessibility laws, these resources are sent to Universities through these programs, but, for this, they must prepare their reform projects. In this regard, Zuliani, Oliveira, Kretzmann and Castro (2014) mention that the majority of students with disabilities face many difficulties when entering Higher Education and, when they enter, they encounter several barriers in their permanence, mainly resulting from the absence of institutional policies, monitoring and providing resources that satisfactorily meet their educational needs.

However, according to the report of the Commission Constituted by Ordinance no. 126, Brazilian universities are expanding their facilities and the number of works completed, between 2003 and 2012, have a total of 3,065,735.17m² of new academic and administrative spaces (Weska et al., 2012). Due to this expansion and the incentive to reach quotas, the number of students with disabilities has increased. Therefore, the academic community needs to mobilize in order to mitigate the obstacles that hinder the permanence of these students at UFPA.

Regarding the type of support offered during the national exam – *ENEM*, 34 research participants received support during the tests. This data reveals that UFPA is in line with Circular Notice no. 277, of May 1996, which highlights that support for the candidate must occur from the drafting of the notice, so that all information about the process is made available with the offering of special classrooms, specialist professionals, technology resources according to the specific needs of the candidate, granting additional time and specialized examining panels.

The research showed that 40 students with disabilities did not participate in research or extension projects at the institution. One of the commitments of the Institutional Development Plan 2016-2025 at UFPA is with the production of knowledge and there can be no dissociation between teaching, research and extension (UFPA, 2016). It was observed that perhaps the lack of students' participation in the projects may harm their academic trajectory, as there was no mention of extension activities. It is believed that a greater investment by the institution in teaching, research and extension activities would be important in the student's academic life, since the involvement would contribute to a more complete and quality learning.

Most students do not receive financial aid from the institution. UFPA participates in financial support programs with the objective of offering equal opportunities to all students and contributing to the improvement of academic performance, offering some types of assistance, within the Institutional Development Plan (UFPA, 2016). However, although the institution offers several financial support programs to students with disabilities, they are unaware of such benefits due to the lack of information on the part of the institution. One of the conditions for students with disabilities to be able to complete their course is the socioeconomic factor, since most of the research participants receive one to two minimum wages, live with their parents and need help from the Federal Government to finish their studies with success.

Regarding school dropout and failure of subjects, it was observed that the majority of students with disabilities were successful in the academic path, as they never asked for Leave of Absence and also did not repeat the discipline. This data is in line with the data presented by Baggi and Lopes (2011) who analyzed the theoretical production that addresses evasion and its relationship with institutional evaluation in Higher Education from the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations between 2008 and 2009. The authors concluded that the reasons for the dropout of students with disabilities in Higher Education are due to the precariousness of Elementary and Secondary Education and personal reasons, such as immaturity, financial difficulties, health problems and family conflicts. In the case of this study, it is possible to consider two possibilities that explain this result, one referring to the positive impact of affirmative actions with regard to the reserve of PwD quotas, and the other referring to the resilient characteristics that can influence the students' good academic performance.

It was observed that the architectural accessibility proved to be the weak point and the aspect that needs adjustments and greater investments by UFPA. In this sense, Ordinance no. 3,284 conditions the granting of authorization, recognition, accreditation, renewal and operation of Higher Education Institutions to the fulfillment of the accessibility requirements of people with disabilities (Ordinance no. 3,284, of November 7, 2003). This Ordinance recommends that universities, when inserting students with disabilities into their context, have the responsibility of guaranteeing them a space free of architectural barriers, such as support with regard to the provision of material in Braille, reading software, material to enlarge texts, build a bibliographic collection in Braille and audio material, as well as Brazilian Sign Language interpreters, flexibility in correcting written tests, stimulating students to learn Portuguese in writing, among other resources. In this sense, it was observed in the students' reports that there is a gap between the reality experienced in the academic context and the determinations established by the legal provisions, especially when students mention the restrictions still found at UFPA. These data reinforce the importance of compliance with legislation and the need for investment in affirmative actions by the institution.

Methodological accessibility was suggested by 20 students with disabilities, demonstrating that the student needs to have access to formal academic content, so that his/her learning opportunity is matched to that of other classmates. In order to succeed in his/her school career, the figure of the professor becomes a fundamental part of the inclusion process. Vitaliano (2007) states that the initial and continuing education of professors is the basis for their daily practice. The professor must understand the types of disabilities and what special educational needs each student has. Some research participants suggested more accessibility centers to meet the demand for their special educational needs, as this segment is still not significant within UFPA.

It was observed, in relation to attitudinal accessibility, that the participants reported discomfort about the posture of teachers and employees when they were unaware of the inclusion process at UFPA. To Passerino and Montardo (2007), it is necessary to develop accessible means and resources that promote the establishment of interfaces with these students and that, consequently, fosters the inclusion process. To the authors, it is important to value "quality of life, human development, income autonomy and equity in opportunities and rights" (p. 5).

As for communicational accessibility, it was realized that UFPA needs to guarantee internal and external communication. For such communication, it implies that it will take a lot of effort, not only with regard to pedagogical issues, but mainly in relation to structural and social issues so that students with disabilities, professors, administrative technicians and other people can move around without problems, something that still needs to be improved within the Campus of Guamá.

In terms of instrumental accessibility, it is believed that the existing resources, equipment and spaces do not yet allow students with disabilities at UFPA to enjoy this technology without restrictions. Regarding programmatic accessibility, students still realize that the laws are still not being complied with, as it is necessary that they become effective for the various changes to take place in order to achieve full inclusion in the academic context.

5 Final considerations

This study contributed to the literature since it brought information from students with disabilities at the Belém Campus of UFPA, Pará, Brazil, allowing to know their profile and the necessary demands for future interventions with regard to access and permanence at the institution. However, despite the political and scientific advances that reverberate in the daily life of academic institutions, students with disabilities in Higher Education still have demands similar to the data found in studies developed on inclusion in Higher Education in the years between 2000 and 2019. These findings become more important when one considers that it is the point of view of the student with disabilities about his/her inclusion process in a public institution of Higher Education. Among the various conceptions about school inclusion, the perception of students with disabilities is very important, as it is from these perceptions that it will be possible to perceive the difficulties they have faced, evaluate their achievements arising from public policies and the generated affirmative actions, making it possible to reflect on what can be accomplished, abandoned or improved in the university context.

On the one hand, the provision of quotas, the academic support made available at the time of the *ENEM* exam and the non-evasion of students were data that revealed the facilitating actions that contribute to the access and the permanence of the student in the institution. On the other hand, UFPA needs to invest more in research, monitoring and extension activities, planning and adopting financial support actions aimed at meeting the physical needs and materials of this public and improving the conditions of architectural accessibility within the Campus, as the lack of these conditions interferes with academic life.

It was noticed that some affirmative actions carried out by UFPA guarantee the participation of these students in the university context, however it was observed that the compliance with the regulations that conduct the minimum conditions of accessibility did not allow to fully guarantee the participation of this student in the university environment, because there are still barriers in the architectural, communicational, methodological and instrumental sphere that strongly hinder the inclusion of this population. It was verified, through the interviewees' statements, that UFPA has been trying to make the university context more accessible, with institutional actions provided for in laws, ordinances and in its Institutional Development Plan (UFPA, 2016), so that these students are guaranteed more effective participation in the university environment. However, the data from this research reveal that this process is slow and that much still needs to be done so that students with disabilities have their accessibility conditions guaranteed.

Considering the difficulties faced to carry out this research, it is worth noting the outdated database consisting of the students' registration information such as year of entry, type of disability, course, telephone and e-mail contacts. The inconsistency of this database made contact with students difficult. These problems indicated a weakness in how data are collected and systematized by UFPA, in a way that may bring negative and inefficient implications for the student with disability who will not have an attendance guaranteed by the institution.

Based on the evidence, it is suggested to continue this study with the inclusion of other institutions of Higher Education in the country, to better understand the reality of these students

in other contexts. Finally, it is expected that this study can contribute to the construction of affirmative action policies that favor the inclusion of students with disabilities at UFPA.

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