

# Evaluation of student assistance programs of the University of Brasília (UnB)

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## Abstract

The inclusion of students in socioeconomic vulnerability in the university demands the implementation of student assistance programs. The objective of this research is to evaluate the student assistance programs of the University of Brasilia (UnB) through the criteria of importance, quality and knowledge. The evaluated programs are: food aid, student housing, socioeconomic and emergency aid, permanence scholarship, access to foreign language and book tickets. For this, 189 questionnaires answered by the benefited students were analyzed through cluster analysis. Programs that offer direct financial resources received suggestions for updating their value and criticism of the constant late payment; other programs showed difficulties in achieving their objectives.

**Keywords:** Evaluation of public policies. Democratization of higher education. Socioeconomic vulnerability.

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## Avaliação dos programas de assistência estudantil da Universidade de Brasília (UnB)

### Resumo

A inclusão de estudantes em vulnerabilidade socioeconômica na universidade demanda a implementação de programas de assistência estudantil. O objetivo da pesquisa é avaliar os programas de assistência estudantil da Universidade de Brasília (UnB) por meio dos critérios de importância, qualidade e conhecimento. Os programas avaliados são: bolsa-alimentação, moradia estudantil, auxílio socioeconômico e emergencial, bolsa-permanência, acesso à língua estrangeira e vale-livro. Para tanto, analisou-se 189 questionários respondidos pelos estudantes beneficiados por meio da análise de cluster. Os programas que oferecem recurso financeiro direto receberam sugestões para a atualização do seu valor e críticas aos constantes atrasos no pagamento, os demais programas mostraram dificuldades em alcançar os seus objetivos.

**Palavras-chave:** Avaliação de políticas públicas. Democratização do ensino superior. Vulnerabilidade socioeconômica.

## Evaluación de los programas de asistencia estudiantil de la Universidad de Brasilia (UnB)

### Resumen

La inclusión de estudiantes en vulnerabilidad socioeconómica en la universidad requiere la implementación de programas de asistencia al estudiante. El objetivo de la investigación es evaluar los programas de asistencia al estudiante de la Universidad de Brasilia (UnB) utilizando los criterios de importancia, calidad y conocimiento. Los programas evaluados son: subsidio de alimentos, alojamiento para estudiantes, asistencia socioeconómica y de emergencia, beca de permanencia, acceso a un idioma extranjero y boletos de libro. Para esto, 189 cuestionarios respondidos por estudiantes beneficiados se analizaron mediante análisis de conglomerados. Los programas que ofrecen recursos financieros directos recibieron sugerencias para actualizar su valor y críticas por el retraso en el pago constante; los otros programas mostraron dificultades para lograr sus objetivos.

**Palabras clave:** Evaluación de políticas públicas. Democratización de la educación superior. Vulnerabilidad socioeconómica.

## **Introduction**

Between 2007 and 2015, with the creation of the Program to Support the Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities (REUNI), public higher education institutions in Brazil more than doubled their number of vacancies. This expansion of higher education was accompanied by policies to democratize the vacancies aimed at the inclusion of students from low-income social classes.

The inclusion of low-income students contributed to the drop out in universities due to the situation of socioeconomic vulnerability of these students and greater difficulties to remain in university, raising the importance of student assistance programs. According to Gisi (2006), it is difficult for students from the poorest social strata to stay in higher education, not only because of the lack of financial resources but also because of the lack of acquisition of "cultural capital" throughout the trajectory of their lives and their studies, a thing you cannot acquire instantaneously.

The classic work that approaches the influence of "cultural capital" on education is the study by Bourdieu and Passeron (1975). The authors discuss the relationship between social and linguistic capital and the apprehension of school content, which ends up disadvantaging the lower social classes and affecting their academic performance and dropout rate. According to Bourdieu and Passeron (1975), the pedagogical discourse of the typical university professor is totally out of the reality of students from low social classes.

In Brazil, student assistance focuses on ensuring the permanence and the quality of academic education for students in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability. Thus, student assistance comprises a set of actions developed in the field of education aimed at providing the conditions (material and immaterial) necessary for students to stay in public universities.

Although student assistance actions have been practiced in Brazil since the 1930's (NASCIMENTO, 2014), it is only after the REUNI that they had a greater impact, highlighting the approval of Decree 7,234 / 2010, which established the National Program of Student Assistance (PNAES). The priority of this decree is to assist students in social vulnerability and with per capita income up to one and half Brazilian minimum wages (BRASIL, 2010).

The assistance actions foreseen in the PNAES should be developed in the following areas: student housing, food, transportation, health care, digital inclusion, culture,

sports, day care and pedagogical support. Each Federal Institution of Higher Education (IFES) is responsible for defining the criteria and methodology for selecting students enrolled in the undergraduate courses who are in social vulnerability and will be benefited.

Among the student assistance actions at the University of Brasilia (UnB), there are the following programs: Food, Socioeconomic Emergency, Student Housing for Undergraduate Students, Access to Foreign Language and Book Ticket; these programs seek to produce social integration with the objective of assuring equal conditions of insertion and participation in university life and graduation for students in situation of socioeconomic vulnerability.

Although it is possible to highlight UnB's commitment to the implementation of student assistance policies, little has been done to evaluate the effectiveness of the actions adopted, and this justifies the evaluation of UnB's student assistance programs. A similar situation occurs in other IFES in Brazil, for example, the Federal Rural University of Pernambuco (SOUZA; COSTA, 2020).

The evaluation of UnB's student assistance programs can contribute to the planning of policies at the university, helping to monitor, implement and adjust its student assistance programs, as well as subsidize decisions about their maintenance or interruption.

Therefore, in order to identify students' knowledge and assessment of UnB's student assistance programs and the way these programs have acted in their academic routine, the objective of the research is to evaluate UnB's student assistance programs according to the perception of its beneficiaries.

## **Theoretical reference**

### **Student Assistance**

At UnB, the management of student assistance programs is the responsibility of the Dean of Community Affairs (DAC) through its Social Development Directory (DDS). The objectives of the student assistance policy at UnB are presented in the Management Report of this board for the years 2016 and 2017 (UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA, 2018, p. 5, our translation)

The student assistance policy aims to expand the conditions of access and permanence of young people in federal public higher education, which implies the development of social inclusion strategies, democratization of access, permanence and academic training with

quality, avoiding retention and the drop out of students in situations of social and economic vulnerability.

The effect of student assistance on students' performance is diverse (LOYALKA; YINGQUAN; JIANGUO; WEIPING; ROZELLE, 2013); it leads to an increase in enrollment in higher education (LINSENMEIER; ROSEN; ROUSE, 2006; AVERY; HOXBY, 2003; KLAUW, 2002), contributes to minimize drop out (BETTINGER, 2004) and influences the choice of the university (AVERY; HOXBY, 2003). The work by Bidle, Kern, Brent, Thurkettle, Puskar and Sekula (2014) emphasized the social importance of student assistance, identifying that the probability of committing suicide of a student who does not receive this assistance is doubled compared to the ones that receive assistance.

Besides the researches that have verified the effects of student assistance programs, it is important to highlight researches that explained the lack of results of these programs due to lack of students' knowledge about them (AVERY; HOXBY, 2003; LINSSENMEIER; ROSEN; ROUSE, 2006).

Despite the lessons learned from the aforementioned studies, Chengfang, Linxiu, Renfu, Xiaobing, Rozelle, Sharbono, Adams, Yaojiang, Ai, Hongbin and Glauben (2011) recommended caution in interpreting the results of these surveys. According to the authors, in many cases problems with the data or with the statistical approaches adopted may be producing biased estimates of the effects of financial assistance on the enrollment and permanence of the student in higher education. The motives arise from analyses that aggregate students with unequal characteristics. Arendt (2013), by analyzing the effect of public financial aid on university dropout, has assumed the limitations suggested by Chengfang, Linxiu, Renfu, Xiaobing, Rozelle, Sharbono, Adams, Yaojiang, Ai, Hongbin and Glauben (2011), but minimized their effect in his conclusions.

In a literature review of international studies about student assistance, Ferreira (2020, p. 20) found that in "many countries, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Sweden and Chile, student assistance is linked to gratuity or student loans for universities tuition payments - due to socioeconomic needs or merit", citing the authors: Dearden, Fitzsimons and Wyness (2014), Avdic and Gartell (2015), Boatman and Long (2016) and Goldrick-Rab; Kelchen; Harris; Benson (2016). The results of these researches have shown a positive effect between student assistance and insertion/permanence in the university, as well as on the development of talents.

In general, the magnitude of the effect of financial aid on the inclusion of low-income students in higher education was similar. In the United Kingdom, Dearden, Fitzsimons and Wyness (2014) estimated that an increase of 1,000 pounds per year in financial aid raises the inclusion rate of underprivileged students by 3.95%. At the United States, Dynarski (2003) found an increase of 3.6% inclusion for the increase in financial aid of 1,000 dollars per year.

### Student Assistance at UnB

In order to have access to Student Assistance Programs at UnB, students must participate in a process that assesses their socioeconomic situation, a process carried out by social workers and governed by an Edict published at the beginning of each academic semester by the DAC / DDS.

UnB offers six benefits (Chart 1), in addition to the Program of the Ministry of Education (MEC Permanency Scholarship), all of them are foreseen in the PNAES of the Federal Government. The programs are financed by the University of Brasilia Foundation (FUB) and the Ministry of Education (MEC).

Chart 1 – UnB Student Assistance Programs

<p><b>Food Aid</b> Free meals at the University restaurant (RU) of the <i>campuses</i> Darcy Ribeiro, Ceilandia, Planaltina and Gama.</p>
<p><b>Student Housing Aid</b> Vacancy in House of University Students (CEU) or monthly aid amounting to R\$ 530.00 (five hundred and thirty reais) for non-resident students in the Federal District.</p>
<p><b>Socioeconomic Aid</b> Financial assistance of R\$ 465.00 (four hundred and sixty-five reais) focused on pedagogical support.</p>
<p><b>Emergency Aid</b> It covers unforeseen and momentary situations of students who are disassociated from Student Assistance Programs.</p>
<p><b>MEC Permanency Scholarship</b> Aid that amounts to R\$ 400.00 (paid by the Ministry of Education for students enrolled in courses with daily instructional time of five hours or more).</p>
<p><b>Access to Foreign Language</b> Free courses at the UnB Language School.</p>
<p><b>Book Ticket</b> 10% discount on the purchase of books by Publisher UnB, accumulating to 40% granted to all University students (DDS partnership and Publisher UnB).</p>

Source: Universidade de Brasília (2015).

### Food Aid Program

The Food Aid Program is developed in partnership with the University Restaurant (RU) and consists of granting subsidies on the prices of meals served by the RU: breakfast, lunch and dinner for students in socio-economic vulnerability. In the beginning, the benefit included only lunch and dinner. In 2011, the RU started to serve breakfast. In 2008, 913 students in socioeconomic vulnerability were enrolled. As of August 2012, this number increased to 2,443 beneficiary students, demonstrating the progress in the program's coverage (UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA, 2016).

Students, teachers and technical-administrative staff can dine in the UnB's RU, which is also open to the community in general. There are units on *campuses* Darcy Ribeiro, Ceilandia (FCE), Gama (FGA), Planaltina (FUP) and Clean Water Farm (FAL). At the Darcy Ribeiro *campus*, the restaurant remains open the whole week. In other *campuses* the restaurant opens only on weekdays. The RU from *campus* Darcy Ribeiro was inaugurated in 1975 and was designed to attend a greater number of students. On the other side, the RUs of *campuses* Ceilandia, Gama and Planaltina were recently inaugurated, between 2014 and 2015, and have similar designs but attend fewer users compared to Darcy. The Clean Water Farm RU was inaugurated in 2013 and is aimed at farm employees and students in the areas of agrarian and biological sciences who hold practical classes and field activities.

The RU aims to provide balanced, healthy and good quality meals at low prices. The charged prices vary according to the user's classification in groups I, II, III and IV. Group I is composed of indigenous students and students who are part of the student assistance programs; they do not pay for food. Foreign students from developing countries with which Brazil has educational and cultural agreements are part of group II and pay R\$ 1.00 per meal. For group III, composed of the students and public servants of UnB, the value of the meal is R\$ 2.50. For general community visitors (group IV), the price of the meal is R\$ 9.00 for breakfast and R\$ 15.00 for lunch or dinner (UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA, 2016).

The RU cafeteria of the *campus* Darcy Ribeiro serves, each month, more than 130 thousand meals. About 300 kg of beans are produced, 260 kg of rice and 1,000 kg of meat per day. The numbers of meals served monthly and per group of UnB RUs in 2015 are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Average number of meals served per month for UnB restaurants

RU	Group I	Group II	Group III	Group IV	Total
Darcy Ribeiro	368,115	36,045	1,143,854	13,490	1,561,503
FAL	2,151	122	10,278	176	12,727
FGA	37,701	90	99,893	153	137,837
FCE	34,116	1,979	73,569	378	110,042
FUP	44,923	816	14,960	196	60,895
Total	487,006	39,052	1,342,553	14,393	1,883,004

Source: Universidade de Brasília (2016).

In addition to the Scholarship Aid and Food Aid Programs, DDS / DAC develops a complementary action to the Food Aid Program. Students participating in the Student Housing Program (PME / G) receive a supplementary allowance of R\$ 15.00 (fifteen reais) per day for the days when the RU is not in operation. In 2015, the number of students assisted by this complementary aid amounted to 970 students.

### Student Housing Program

The Student Housing Program offers temporary habitation in the CEU or financial assistance to graduate students in socio-economic vulnerability, primarily those with family living outside the Federal District (DF) or from areas of difficult access to the chosen *campus*.

The CEU consists of two blocks, located on the *campus* Darcy Ribeiro, currently totalizing 90 duplex apartments and equipped with electro domestics and furniture, which are organized to receive 04 students per apartment, a total of 360 vacancies (UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA, 2015).

The student housing program offers vacancies to students participating in the modalities: a) vacancy in an apartment in the CEU; b) monthly grant of financial aid that amounts to R\$ 530.00 (five hundred and thirty reais) when there are no vacancies available in the CEU and in the existence of budget availability. For students of *campuses* Ceilandia, Gama and Planaltina, the benefit of student housing is available only in the pecuniary form, given the distance of these *campuses* from the CEU (UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA, 2015).

Student referrals to the Student Housing Program are conducted by the DDS / DAC during the academic semesters, according to the availability of vacancies and the second specific Edict. In 2015, 1,245 students benefited, 288 resided in the CEU and



957 received housing assistance of pecuniary nature (UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA, 2015).

The maximum residence time of the student in the CEU is up to two semesters beyond the regular period of his course. It is not allowed to host friends and relatives with the exception of disabled students who need their caregivers. The student may lose the vacancy when the following hypotheses occur: to be absent from the CEU for more than 15 consecutive days, even during a vacation, if he does not have the consent of the CEU administration or in case of disobedience of coexistence rules.

### **Programs: Socioeconomic Assistance (PAS and UnB) and Permanence Scholarship (PBP / MEC)**

The Socioeconomic Aid Program (PAS and UnB) grants financial assistance to students in socioeconomic vulnerability that amounts to R\$ 465.00 (four hundred and sixty-five reais). This aid is granted on a monthly basis and has the purpose of financial complementation and to prevent student dropout. According to data from Universidade de Brasília (2015), the program benefited 2,432 students in 2015.

The student who is benefited by the PAS and UnB can accumulate more than one scholarship or aid, which may occur due to any teaching, research or extension activities, but the total sum of the amount received per student cannot exceed the amount of one and a half Brazilian minimum wages (1.5 MW).

The student in social vulnerability that wants to receive the PAS and UnB aid must be enrolled in an on-site undergraduate course, have completed the minimum credit amount of the course chart, not hold a higher education diploma, not exceed two semesters of the regulatory time of the course and not participate in the MEC permanence scholarship program. If the student presents two or more locked course disciplines and grades inferior to "MM" (middle score), he will be sent to the University Orientation Service of the Dean of Undergraduate Education of the University of Brasília (SOU / DEG / UnB), in order to verify the reasons for his low academic performance (UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA, 2014).

The Permanence Scholarship Program (PBP / MEC) is similar to the PAS and UnB, but is granted by the Federal Government and, in addition to students with socioeconomic vulnerability, benefits indigenous and *quilombola*<sup>1</sup> students. Its value is equivalent to that practiced in the federal policy of granting scientific initiation grants,

currently R\$ 400.00 (four hundred reais). For indigenous and *quilombola*<sup>1</sup> students, a differentiated value is guaranteed, currently amounting to R\$ 900.00 (nine hundred reais). This resource is paid directly to the undergraduate student through a benefit card.

PBP / MEC is offered to students under the following conditions: have *per capita* family income not exceeding one minimum and a half wage; must be enrolled in undergraduate courses with an average hourly load of more than or equal to five hours a day; must not have exceeded two semesters of the regulatory time of the undergraduate course in which he/she is enrolled and be of indigenous or *quilombola* ethnicity (BRASIL, 2013).

The UnB adhered to the PBP / MEC and has the function of carrying out the socioeconomic study for the selection and enrollment of the beneficiaries, as well as of performing the social and academic follow-up of the participants. In the 2015 year, 826 students were attended by this program at UnB (UNIVERSIDADE DE BRASÍLIA, 2015).

### **UnB Languages and Ticket Book Programs**

The Foreign Language Access Program (PALE) is a partnership with the UnB Language School and offers up to two vacancies per class with the exemption of monthly and tuition fees for students enrolled in student assistance. This partnership began in 2010 and is under negotiation with the possibility of expanding the number of places according to the number of students per class.

The Ticket Book Program (PVL), is a partnership with UnB Publisher and offers to the beneficiary student five student vouchers in each academic semester, providing a 10% discount on the purchase of pedagogical materials and books from UnB Publisher, in addition to the 40% discount already offered to all UnB students.

### **Emergency Aid Program**

The Emergency Aid Program (PAE) is intended for students who are regularly enrolled in on-site undergraduate courses, who are in situations of unexpected and momentary socioeconomic vulnerability and who, as a matter of priority, are not included in other UnB student assistance programs. Emergency situations are analyzed

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<sup>1</sup> *Quilombola* is an Afro-Brazilian resident of *quilombo* settlements first established by escaped slaves in Brazil.

by the DDS / DAC staff of social workers. The amount of the benefit is of four hundred sixty-five reais (R\$ 465.00) and only the first aid can be paid to students who have not undergone socioeconomic evaluation. The student can receive up to the limit of three aids at the same semester in case the situation of unexpected vulnerability is repeated.

## Material and Methods

### Data

The data of this research were obtained through the application of an online questionnaire to the student quota benefited by the UnB student assistance. The questionnaire measured on a five-point ordinal scale the knowledge, importance and quality degree of these UnB student assistance programs, as well as, through open questions, collected suggestions and / or criticisms from the interviewees for each program analyzed.

The collection period lasted 45 days, took place during the months of November and December 2015, and had the support of the DDS / DAC to send the questionnaires to 1,938 (one thousand, nine hundred and thirty-eight) students participating in the UnB student assistance. In order to increase the size of the sample, the research was disseminated in social networks frequented by the students sampled.

From the 45 days of data collection, it was noticed that the effort to expand the sample no longer had any effect, only leaving the researcher responsible to scale out the limitation of the sample achieved.

The evaluation of the error margin of the sample was based on the estimation of the population proportion for finite population (Equation 1), admitting a 95% trust rating (1.96) in the calculation. This method was chosen due to the data being collected on an ordinal scale and to the fact that the population is not too large and can be considered as finite (MARTINS, 2006).

$$E = 1,96 \sqrt{\frac{0,25}{n-1} \left( \frac{N-n}{N} \right)} \quad [1]$$

E = Error Margin

n = Number of individuals in the sample

N = Population size

## **Method**

The method employed to analyze the data was the content analysis for the answers of the open questionnaire questions and the Cluster Analysis (AC) for the closed questions. AC is a useful technique for detecting homogeneous groups of variables by means of similarity measures. The AC was applied to verify the variable clusters according to their quality, importance and knowledge degrees perceived by the beneficiaries of the UnB student assistance programs.

The similarity measure adopted in the AC was the Euclidean distance, adopting the hierarchical algorithm in the formation of the clusters. At this hierarchical method, clusters are formed based on the closest pairs of individuals according to the chosen similarity measure (HAIR JÚNIOR; ANDERSON; TATHAM; BLACK; BABIN, 2005).

The adopted procedure to link the clusters was the complete binding or the furthest neighbor. According to Pestana and Gageiro (2005), this is one of the most used methods, being based on the distance between the most different members of each cluster. At each stage of the agglomeration, the two groups with the lowest maximum distance (more alike) are combined (HAIR JÚNIOR; ANDERSON; TATHAM; BLACK; BABIN, 2005).

AC is not a statistical inference technique, which allows wide applicability because of its freedom from statistical assumptions. However, there is no standard procedure and purpose to determine the final number of clusters to be interpreted, so ad hoc procedures were employed for this purpose. The decision of the final number of clusters sought to reach the lowest number of clusters and maintain a simplified and objective interpretation of the results.

## **Results and Discussions**

### **Data Sample Evaluation**

The sample was composed of 189 (one hundred and eighty-nine) questionnaires answered, corresponding to approximately 10% of the student population enrolled in the UnB socioeconomic assistance program until the second half of 2014. Noteworthy that the sample reached has access to all the student assistance programs analyzed. The relationship between sample size and population was in agreement with the

suggestions of Nazareth (1999). According to the author, the representativity of the study sample must be guaranteed by at least 10% of the total number of the target population.

The error margin calculated for the sample corresponded to 6.7% for more or less and was lower than that accepted in the survey conducted by Almeida, Silva and Angelo (2011), Neres (2015) and Cancian (2016).

### **Evaluation of UnB Student Assistance Programs**

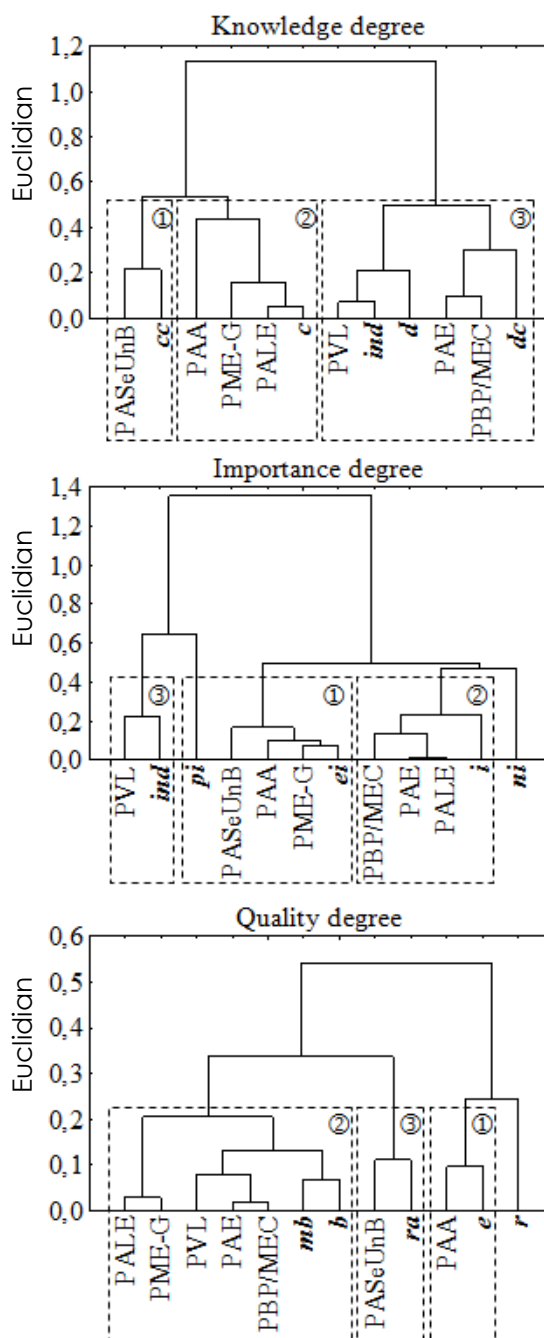
The AC grouped three sets of variables that were similar according to the knowledge, importance and quality degrees perceived by the beneficiaries of the UnB student assistance programs (Figure 1). According to Chart 2, the groups formed in the AC can be classified in:

- Group ①: variables with a higher degree of knowledge, importance and quality;
- Group ②:  
variables with intermediate degree of knowledge, importance and quality;
- Group ③: variables with a lower degree of knowledge, importance and quality.

The most important student assistance programs among students' perceptions were: PAS and UnB (Socioeconomic Aid Program); PAA (Food Aid Program) and PME / G (Student Housing Program for Undergraduate Students). These results demonstrated a greater concern of students in socioeconomic vulnerability with their basic needs, such as housing and food, while academic, emergency or other needs of a specific nature are of secondary concern (Chart 2).

Among the most important programs, only PAA (Food Aid Program) reached the highest quality level and PAS and UnB (Socioeconomic Aid Program) the highest level of knowledge, suggesting priority actions in the dissemination of the PAA and PME / G programs (Student Housing Program), as well as the improvement of the PME / G program and, mainly, the PAS and UnB. Of course, it is assumed that the programs identified as the most important programs, PAS and UnB, PAA and PME / G, are the top priority in possible interventions by the competent entities of UnB (Chart 2).

Figure 1 – Knowledge, importance and quality of UnB's assistance programs



Note: PAS and UnB - Socioeconomic Aid Program; PAA - Food Aid Program; PME / G - Student Housing Program for Undergraduate Students; PALE - Foreign Language Access Program; PBP / MEC – Permanence Grant Program of the MEC; PAE - Emergency Aid Program; PVL – Book Ticket Program; cc - agree completely; c - agree; ind - indifferent; d - disagree; dc - completely disagree; ei - extremely important; i - important; pi - unimportant; ni - not important; e - excellent; mb - very good; b - good; ra - reasonable; r - bad.

Source: The authors (2016).

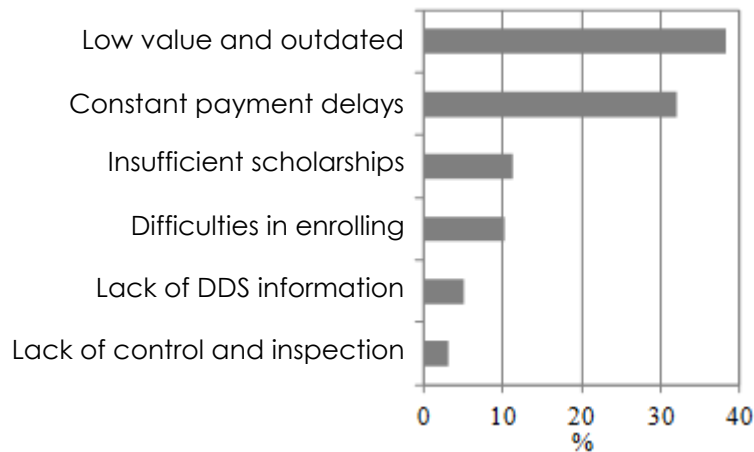
Chart 2 – Summary of evaluation results of the Student Assistance Programs of UnB

Groups	Knowledge	Importance	Quality
Larger	PAS and UnB	PAS and UnB, PAA and PME / G	PAA
Intermediate	PAA, PME / G and PALE	PBP / MEC, PAE and PALE	PALE, PME / G, PVL, PAE and PBP / MEC
Smaller	PVL, PAE and PBP / MEC	PVL	PAS and UnB

Note: PAS and UnB - Socioeconomic Aid Program; PAA - Program Food Aid; PME / G - Student Housing Program for Undergraduate Studies; PALE - Foreign Language Access Program; PBP / MEC - Permanency Scholarship Program of the Ministry of Education; PAE - Emergency Aid Program; PVL - Book Ticket Program.  
 Source: The authors (2016).

The content of student criticism or suggestions for improvement of the Socioeconomic Aid Program (PAS and UnB) focused on the low value of the benefit, highlighting its lack of updating and the constant payment delays. Subsequently, problems such as insufficient scholarships and difficulties in the enrollment process and renewal for enrollment in the program stood out. A reduced number of comments pointed out difficulties in obtaining information from the DDS and an insufficiency in the control and supervision of the beneficiaries (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – Percentage of criticisms or suggestions pointed out by students to improve the Socioeconomic Aid Program



Note: 97 is the total number of suggestions or criticisms for improvements of PAS and UnB.  
 Source: The authors (2016).

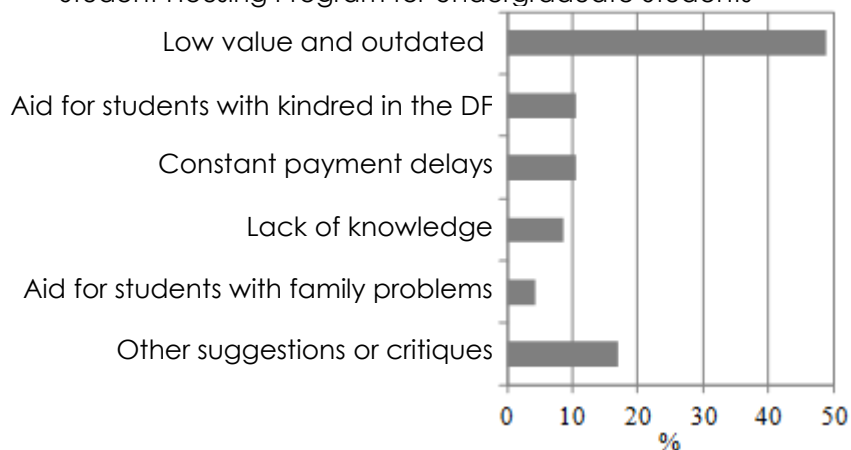
Other federal universities in Brazil have programs similar to PAS and UnB paid by UnB. The Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) maintains the scholarship aid and the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR) grants the permanence scholarship. These benefits consist of a financial assistance grant whose current value corresponds to R\$ 400.00 per month (UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO RIO DE JANEIRO, 2016; UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DO PARANÁ, 2016). The Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) offers the

*Baeta Vianna* Maintenance Grant Program, which is a monthly financial support that amounts to R\$ 400.00 total and R\$ 240.00 partial, according to the student's vulnerability degree.

According to the results of Chart 2, the Student Housing Program for Undergraduate Students (PME / G), ranked among the three most important UnB programs, did not rank among the best quality programs or among the most knowledgeable ones, suggesting an intervention of the DDS / DAC in these aspects for this Program.

Similar to PAS and UnB, the main criticisms of the students for the Student Housing Program for Undergraduate Students (PME / G) is pecuniary, such as low values and late payments. The payment of insufficient amounts obliges students to rent properties on the outskirts of Brasília and away from the *campus* where they study, increasing transportation costs and making locomotion difficult. Other critiques for the PME / G were marginal, highlighting suggestions for more flexible inclusion rules in the program, favoring an individualized analysis of each case, such as the possibility of participation of students who have relatives in the DF or that have family problems, even if they are not in a condition of socioeconomic vulnerability (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – Percentage of criticisms or suggestions pointed out by students to improve the Student Housing Program for Undergraduate Students



Note: 47 is the total number of suggestions or criticisms for improvements of PME / G  
Source: The authors (2016).

Other criticisms pointed to the PME / G (Student Housing Program for Undergraduate Students) were related to the lack of knowledge of the program (Figure 3). The explanation for these results is due to the fact that students in socioeconomic vulnerability that have family residency or relatives in the DF face



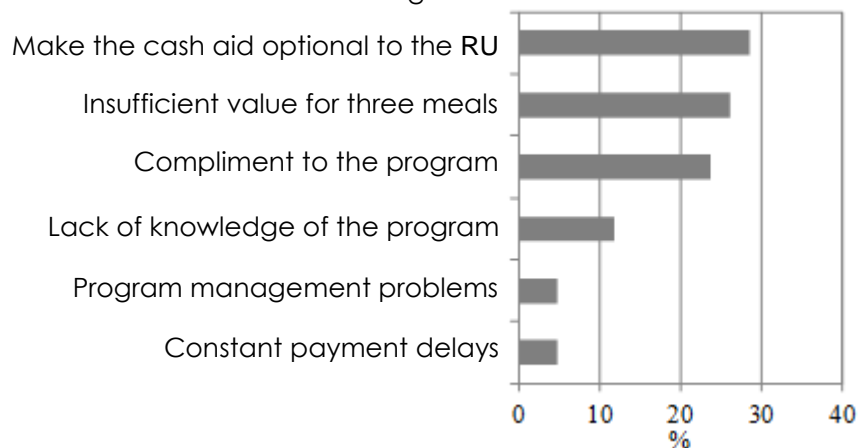
great restrictions to participate in the program and probably would not seek information about the program.

A set of isolated and diverse opinions was also observed, for example: Edict delays for applications in the PME / G, DDS professionals unprepared to attend the students, excess of bureaucratic process, insufficient scholarships, possibility of program entrance for those who have previously graduated.

The Food Aid Program (PAA) was characterized among the most important of the UnB, besides that it was scored with the highest quality (Chart 2). The high quality of the program probably reflected the benefits of eating in the RU, not only because of the free food, but also for the agility, easiness and possibility of integration with colleagues in the meal. In addition, the offer of financial resources in situations where the RU is closed ensures greater mobility choice so that the student can make his meal and may have contributed to the improvement in the perception of the quality of the program.

The quality of the Food Aid Program (PAA) was confirmed by the elevated number of compliments written on open questions. There are suggestions for improvement focused on providing financial assistance for food as an alternative to the RU and not as a supplement when the RU is closed. A smaller number of critical issues pointed out the lack of knowledge about the program, management problems and delays in the payment of financial assistance (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Percentage of criticism or suggestions made by students to improve the Food Aid Program



Note: 42 is the total number of suggestions or criticisms to improve the Food Aid Program.  
Source: The authors (2016).

In students' perceptions, the fact that the RU is open does not guarantee its accessibility, highlighting various difficulties that limit its access, ranging from: the incompatibility of opening hours for dinner, especially for students of the night shift;

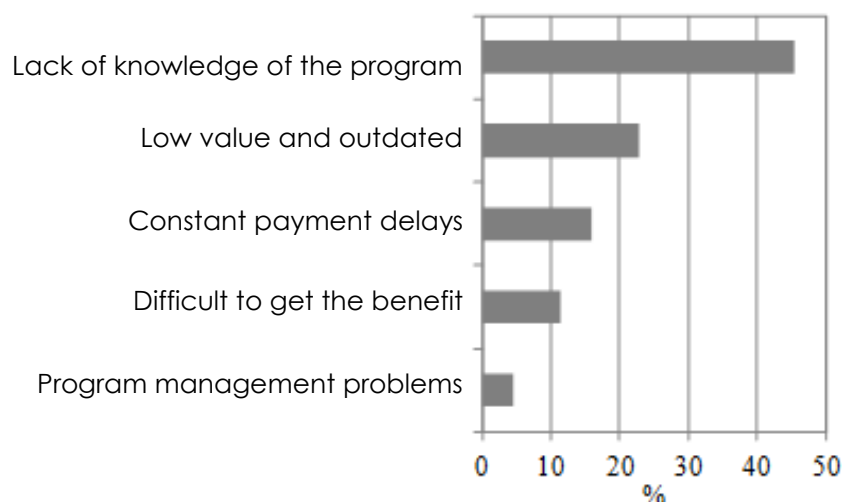
family and/or academic issues that hinder the student's presence at UnB during mealtimes; elevated time loss and transportation cost for students who live far away, preventing a trip exclusively to eat the meal at UnB, among others. Another focus of criticism is that the financial support offered in cases when the RU is closed is not enough to consume the same meals as if the RU was open, *i.e.* the current value of R\$ 15.00 (fifteen reais) is insufficient to provide the three daily meals offered by the RU outside the University.

The MEC Permanence Scholarship Program (PBP / MEC), Foreign Language Access Program (PALE) and Emergency Aid Program (PAE) were classified with an intermediate degree of importance, suggesting a secondary priority in possible improvement interventions, either in aspects of communication or quality (Chart 2).

The MEC Permanence Scholarship Program (PBP / MEC) is a program unknown by students, which limited their capacity to make comments or suggestions in the questionnaire. This is a program that has the same objectives of the Socioeconomic Aid Program (PAS and UnB); moreover the program prioritizes indigenous and *quilombolas* which, regardless of the workload of the courses in which they are enrolled, will receive R\$ 900.00 (nine hundred reais). This fact helps to explain the lack of knowledge of the program and the criticism about the difficulty to acquire the benefit by most students.

The main criticisms of the MEC Permanence Scholarship Program (PBP / MEC) were similar to those made to the PAS and UnB: low value of the benefit and constant payment delays (Figure 5).

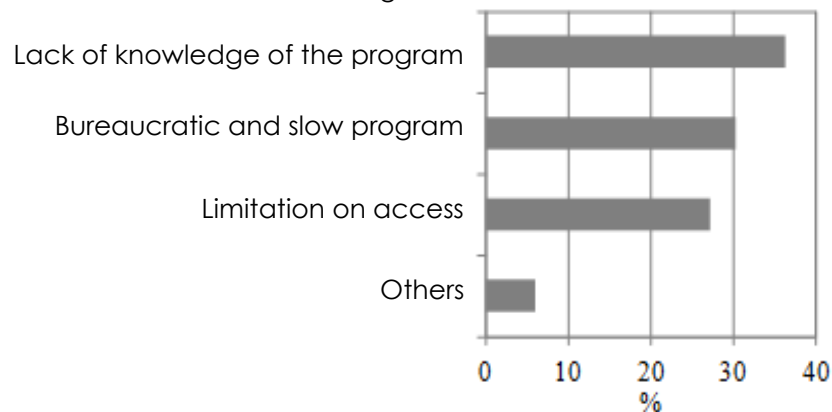
Figure 5 – Percentage of criticism or suggestions made by students to improve Permanence Scholarship Program of the Ministry of Education



Note: 44 is the total number of suggestions or criticisms to improve the PBP / MEC.  
Source: The authors (2016).

The Emergency Aid Program (PAE) is unknown by most, probably because it is available only for students in socioeconomic vulnerability and that are not met by other programs such as Socioeconomic Aid Program (PAS and UnB), Student Housing Program for Undergraduate Students (PME / G) or the MEC Permanence Scholarship Program (PBP / MEC). This fact contributed to generate criticism for the limited access, as students perceive the program as a possible aid in cases where they are not covered by other benefits and not as an emergency program to address unexpected situations (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – Percentage of criticism or suggestions made by students to improve the Emergency Aid Program

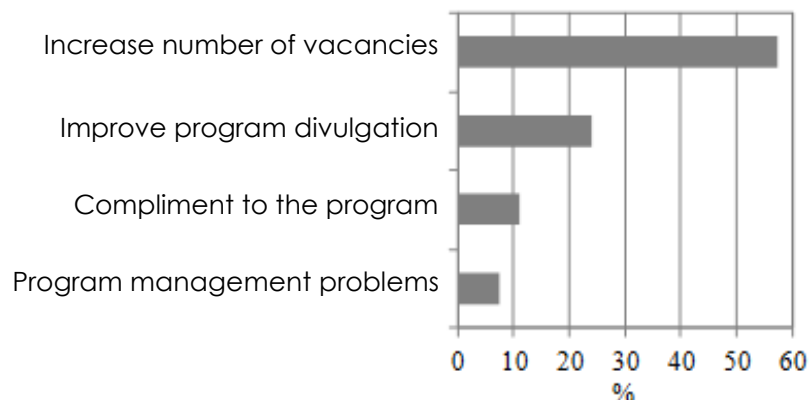


Note: 33 is the total number of suggestions or criticisms to improve the PAE.  
Source: The authors (2016).

Beyond the limitations in divulgation and access to the Emergency Aid Program (PAE), the students interviewed criticized its bureaucracy and sluggishness, limiting the program's effectiveness to attend emergency cases, which as a rule, require quick responsiveness.

Criticism of the Foreign Language Access Program (PALE) focused almost exclusively on the expansion and publicity of the program, showing its great acceptance in the perception of students (Figure 7). The gap between demand and supply of vacancies for students in socioeconomic vulnerability at UnB's Language School became clear after the comments of the students, that reported humiliating situations as, for example, the need to sleep in the row to get the benefit.

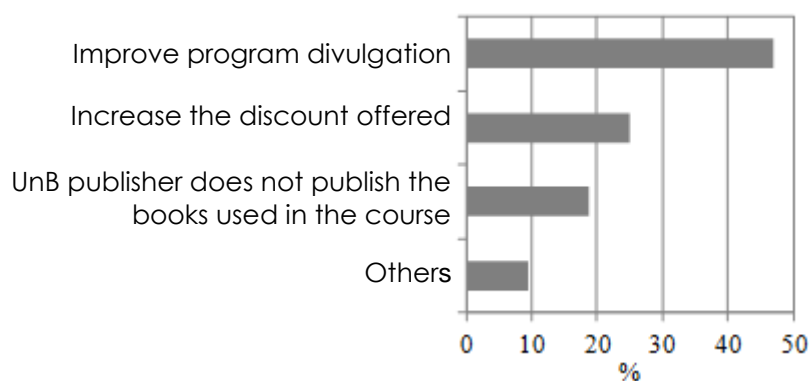
Figure 7 – Percentage of criticism or suggestions made by students to improve the Access Program for Foreign Language



Note: 54 is the total number of suggestions or criticism to improve PALE.  
Source: The authors (2016).

Finally, the Book Ticket Program (PVL) was characterized as the least important and, along with the Permanence Scholarship Program of the Ministry of Education (PBP / MEC) and the Emergency Aid Program (PAE), among the most unknown UnB programs (Chart 2). Besides the lack of divulgation of the Book Ticket Program (PVL), the students criticized the low discount offered, only 10%, and the lack of books they need in their respective areas that are published by UnB Publisher, factors that limit the program effectiveness (Figure 8).

Figure 8 – Percentage of criticism or suggestions made by students to improve the Book Ticket Program



Note: 32 is the total number of suggestions or criticism for PVL.  
Source: The authors (2016).

Some comments about the Book Ticket Program (PVL) indicated little to no usage of the program, in accordance with the answers grouped in the dimension "other" in Figure 8. In general, the comments highlighted the range of books from the library and access to free didactic material through the internet. Regarding the use of the library,

a peculiar feature of students in socioeconomic vulnerability is their greater permanence and proximity to UnB, a fact that explains their increased frequency in the library.

## Conclusions

Among the student assistance programs of UnB, the most important are the Socioeconomic Aid Program, the Food Aid Program and the Student Housing Program. The Food Aid Program was identified as the program with the highest quality and the Socioeconomic Aid Program as the most known. In general, all UnB student assistance programs showed some deficiency in the knowledge or quality aspects and can be improved by UnB.

All student assistance programs that provide some direct financial resources received suggestions for updating the value, especially the Student Housing Program, given the incompatibility of the amount received with the high cost of living in Brasília. Besides the low value offered by these programs, numerous criticisms were also identified about constant delays in the payment of benefits. A specific criticism for the Permanence Scholarship Program was that students do not know it, likely because it is a program directed to a specific audience of indigenous and *quilombolas* population.

The possibility to eat free meals in the RU raised the quality perception of the Food Aid Program for students in socioeconomic vulnerability. Indeed, the perception of this program pondered its high relative benefit, because the consumption of food outside the RU, besides being very expensive, implies the locomotion obstacle of leaving the *campus*. Still, although highly rated, there were suggestions for the payment of monetary value in cases where the beneficiary proves difficulty of access to the RU, turning this financial aid as an alternative to the RU. To this end, it would be necessary to raise the value that is currently paid where the RU is closed, enough to hold three meals outside the university.

The Emergency Aid Program (PAE) demonstrated limited effectiveness at achieving its objective; the reasons were the poor divulgation and bureaucracy / slowness in granting the benefit, therefore being incompatible with the purpose of attending emergency issues, a thing that requires agility and well-known rules. The fact that this aid is granted only for students not enrolled in other UnB's student assistance programs has also been the focus of much criticism; the argument is that all students

in socioeconomic vulnerability may experience unexpected and momentary situations and other benefits do not possess this emergency feature.

The Foreign Language Access Program (PALE), in essence, did not suffer big criticisms. UnB Language School received much praise and the importance of the program was recognized by students. The big problem of this program is the vacancy mismatch between supply and demand which limits access to this benefit.

Among the programs analyzed, the Book Ticket Program (PVL) was the least important, and presented difficulties in achieving its goals. The lack of relevance of the little discount on the purchase of books is due to the accessibility of free stuff on the internet or in the library. The difficulty of fulfilling its goal stems from its low discount, only 10% of the total book value, and its restriction to books published only by UnB Publisher, which does not include most of the books used at the university.

In general, UnB's student assistance programs are in line with the provisions of the PNAES, although there is a demand for other programs, such as: digital inclusion (including for the purchase of equipment to student use) and pedagogical support (mainly for basic subjects in the exact area). Digital inclusion initiatives to keep up with disciplines during the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) period were developed, but still far from the current needs of students.

In the second semester of 2017, UnB created the daycare assistance, a scholarship of R\$ 485.00 for students with children under four years old. This is the least demanded program at the university today. There is also psychological support, through consultations and conversation circles, apparently a poorly developed program given its importance and demand.

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