



Article

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## Indigenous students' access to the Federal University of Maranhão: the implications of the Ethnic Self-Declaration Verification Commission

O acesso de estudantes indígenas à Universidade Federal do Maranhão: as implicações da Comissão de Verificação da Autodeclaração Étnica

El acceso de estudiantes indígenas em la Universidad Federal de Maranhão: las implicaciones de la Comisión de Verificación de Autodeclaración Étnica

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**Abstract:** This article aims to reflect on the access of indigenous students to the Federal University of Maranhão-UFMA, focusing on the implications that come from the implementation of the Commission for Verification of Ethnic Self-Declaration in the admission process, allocation of seats, and profile of indigenous students enrolled in on-campus courses at this university from 2007 to 2021. The research is exploratory-descriptive, and the analysis relied, among others, on the perspective of Bourdieusian social theory and on documentary analysis of institutional regulations and reports from the Integrated System of Management of Academic Activities of UFMA. It was observed that, following the Commission's establishment, new criteria for indigenous identity are required to minimize fraud. Despite a decrease in the occupancy rate of these seats, the data on the profile of incoming students indicate a more effective representation of indigenous individuals.

**Keywords:** affirmative action; indigenous; higher education.

**Resumo:** Este artigo tem o propósito de refletir sobre o acesso de estudantes indígenas à Universidade Federal do Maranhão-UFMA, com foco nas implicações advindas da implantação da Comissão de Verificação da Autodeclaração Étnica nos processos de ingresso, de ocupação de vagas e de perfil de estudantes ingressantes nas vagas destinadas aos povos indígenas dos cursos presenciais desta universidade, no período de 2007 a 2021. A pesquisa é exploratório-descritiva e a análise apoiou-se, entre outros, na perspectiva da teoria social bourdieusiana e em análise documental de normativas institucionais e relatórios do Sistema Integrado de Gestão de Atividades Acadêmicas da UFMA. Observou-se que, após a Comissão, novos critérios de identidade indígena são exigidos, com intuito de minimizar as fraudes. Mesmo com uma diminuição da taxa de ocupação dessas vagas, os dados do perfil de ingressantes sinalizam uma ocupação mais efetiva de indígenas.

**Palavras-chave:** ação afirmativa; indígena; ensino superior.

**Resumen:** Este artículo tiene el propósito de reflexionar sobre el acceso de estudiantes indígenas en la Universidad Federal de Maranhão-UFMA, con enfoque en las implicaciones surgidas de la implementación de la Comisión de Verificación de la Autodeclaración Étnica en los procesos de ingreso, ocupación de plazas y perfil de estudiantes que ingresan en las plazas destinadas a los pueblos indígenas de los cursos presenciales de esta universidad, en el período de 2007 a 2021. La investigación es de carácter exploratorio-descriptivo y el análisis se apoyó, entre otros, en la perspectiva de la teoría social bourdieusiana y en el análisis documental de normativas institucionales e informes del Sistema Integrado de Gestión de Actividades Académicas de la UFMA. Se observó que después de la Comisión, se exigen nuevos criterios de identidad indígena, con el objetivo de minimizar los fraudes. A pesar de una disminución en la tasa de ocupación de estas plazas, los datos del perfil de los estudiantes ingresantes indican una ocupación más efectiva de población indígena.

**Palavras clave:** acción afirmativa; indígena; enseñanza superior.

## 1 Introduction

Brazil is a diverse country. In terms of indigenous populations, they are diverse people and diverse histories that, regardless of whether or not they are seen by the State and Brazilian society, present complex, distinct social organizations and a rich repertoire of knowledge, values, cultures, languages and worldviews. According to the 2010 Census (IBGE<sup>1</sup>, 2012), 896,917 people declared themselves indigenous, divided into 305 ethnicities and 274 indigenous languages. In Maranhão there were 36,272 people. It is the second State in the Northeast with the highest percentage of indigenous population, at a proportion of 0.5% in relation to the State's total. Some of the ethnicities identified in Maranhão are: Tenetehara (Guajajara and Tembê), Timbira, Krikati, Kanela, Ka'apor and Guajá. Of these, the Tenetehara/Gujajajara ethnic group has the largest population in the State, with 24,428 people. In the capital, São Luís, 1,815 self-declared indigenous people live outside indigenous lands.

Maranhão is among the three states with the highest number of cases of possessory invasions in indigenous lands, illegal exploitation of natural resources and various damages to property (CIMI, 2021). Many of its peoples, due to violent expropriation of their lands and intense contacts with the surrounding non-indigenous society, were forced to seek new ways of living, surviving and resisting, resulting in indigenous mobilizations mainly involved in territorial conflicts and also aimed at improving the living conditions of its people, such as health and education.

In this context, demands for indigenous university education in Maranhão, mobilized mainly by indigenous leaders of the Tenetehara/Gujajajara ethnic group, are part of national discussions about indigenous peoples' access to Brazilian university education, which have intensified as a consequence of the expansion of Basic Education to their peoples and the actions of indigenous movements in search of affirmative actions and university education in various areas of knowledge of non-indigenous society, to obtain more tools to fight for their collective rights and for the affirmation of their peoples, and, as explained Baniwa (2019), transforming white people's own knowledge not against white people, but in favor of indigenous peoples, into strategies of defense, resistance and less unequal dialogues between original peoples, the State and the dominant national society.

In order to better understand these realities, this article aims to reflect on the access of indigenous students to the Federal University of Maranhão-FUMA, focusing on the implications arising from the implementation of the Ethnic Self-Declaration Verification Commission in the admission processes, occupation of vacancies and changes in the profile of entrants in vacancies destined for indigenous people in the face-to-face courses at this university in the time frame from 2007 to 2021. The

<sup>1</sup> Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. In portuguese, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE)

research is exploratory-descriptive and the analysis was based on the theoretical perspective of Bourdieu (2019, 2020), in authors who investigated and debated affirmative actions and access of indigenous peoples to university education, such as Baniwa (2019), Oliveira (2018,2020) Maciel (2009), Amaral (2021), Coelho (2006), or who discuss the performance of Hetero-identification Boards, such as Silveira (2017), Miranda, Souza and Almeida (2020), Camilloto and Camilloto (2022) and in documentary analysis of institutional regulations, entrance exam notices, entry regulation notices for undergraduate courses at FUMA and reports from the FUMA Integrated Academic Activities Management System.

The first section reflects on the implementation of affirmative actions for indigenous peoples at FUMA and how this issue was secondary and has not yet been consolidated as a priority within the scope of this university, being the reflection of an academic field that reproduces the hierarchy of the social structure founded in racism, and in which indigenous peoples have historically been situated as inferiors. The second section discusses the ethnic identity criteria required for quotas for indigenous people and a scenario of new agents and new conflicts intensified by demands from indigenous leaders and allegations of fraud via the Federal Public Ministry - MPF, which resulted in the establishment of the Commission of Verification of Ethnic Self-Declaration in 2018 and its problem of inserting hetero-identification processes associated with the self-identification of candidates and in the institutional/state (in)definitions of classifying/categorizing ethnic identities. The third section will reflect on some implications that this Commission had on the admission process, occupation of vacancies and profile of entrants, making some comparisons in periods before and after the Commission's activities. Finally, considerations and prospects for future studies will be made.

## **2 Affirmative actions and indigenous peoples in university education: a secondary agenda at FUMA**

University education of indigenous peoples, as it is configured today in Brazil, was built from varied relationships established both globally and locally, in a racist social structure, which historically hierarchized social groups and pushed indigenous peoples into disadvantaged positions with their constantly threatened societies. From the perspective of Bourdieu's theoretical contributions (2019; 2020), we can see that this configuration was mainly favored by the accumulation of symbolic power by the Western State and its imposition of categories of thought considered legitimate, which, in Brazil, enabled a bureaucratic state field, mobilized by agents who incorporated classification schemes of this racist social structure, permeated by representations of dehumanization of the indigenous person, characterized as an animalized and transitory being on the path to civilizing status. These representations come together with the colonization process of Brazil, with the logic of Western European rationality



and its State with already established classification systems, imposing themselves on all forms of social organization already existing in our territories, in relations of physical and asymmetric symbolic, operating state actions aimed at attempting the physical, moral and cultural extermination of indigenous peoples and to this day prevailing public policies with social effects of subjugation of their people or few changes to this structure.

In this understanding, the university field, as a field arising from the state field, also incorporates these representations and is characterized as a relatively autonomous microcosm of social relations, with its own rules of organization and hierarchies, where there will always be struggles, "whose specific forms must always be sought, between the new competitor, who tries to eliminate obstacles to the right of entry, and the dominant one, who tries to defend the monopoly" (Bourdieu, 2019, p.110).

In their desire to question this Brazilian university field and its logic of access, social agents linked to social movements, mostly black, started important debates, with a realization, with national and international pressure from state and federal governments to realize the existence of ethnic-racial diversity in Brazilian society, which was not present within universities, which, as research by Ristoff (2014) shows, especially in high-demand courses, were mostly occupied by the white elite. These mobilizations had repercussions on university education institutions which, driven by struggles and forces among social agents to change the admission policy to undergraduate courses, began to implement affirmative action policies.

It is also worth highlighting that this is a period of promoting diversity at the university, through proposals made possible by international agreements, by the federal government in the form of the Secretariat for Continuing Education, Literacy and Diversity – SCELDT, of the Ministry of Education and Culture – MEC and even based on assumptions of socio-racial inclusion, as a mechanism of the Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities – SPREPFU (to which FUMA adhered through UNCO<sup>2</sup> Resolution No. 104/2007). There was, then, an articulation between the federal government (via SCELDT/MEC) and the Afro-Brazilian Studies Centers - ABSC of several Federal University Education Institutions - FUEI for a permanent discussion on education and ethnic-racial diversity (Pantoja, 2007).

FUMA, in this scenario, was not exempt from social pressure regarding access to its vacancies and demands to combat ethnic-racial inequalities were intensified in 2004, mediated by researchers and scholars, social agents who are members of ABSC - FUMA, which prepared the initial proposal for an affirmative action program, supported by experiences from programs already implemented and debates, events and meetings with the university administration to present the proposal (Pantoja, 2007; Maciel, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> University Council. In portuguese, Conselho Universitário (CONSUN).

The articulations between ABSC-FUMA and the Permanent Entrance Exam Committee - PEEC, the latter responsible for the final draft of the selection process to be approved by the Teaching, Research and Extension Council - TREC, generated some impasses regarding the different views surrounding affirmative actions to be adopted, while the first was in favor of separate percentages for black students and for public students, the latter defended quotas only for students from public schools (Pantoja, 2007).

These impasses were centered on the duality of “social quotas” and “racial quotas”, the latter aimed at black populations, with indigenous quotas being a secondary issue in the main discussions taking place at this university, whose academic community had neither its teaching staff nor its student body, in an official way, indigenous people mobilized in this process. Furthermore, as reported by Oliveira (2018), there was a lack of coordination with representative entities, with indigenous peoples and with more scholars on the subject to demand greater depth in this reflection.

The most decisive clashes regarding an affirmative action program at FUMA, as observed, were fought by social agents mainly linked to ABSC-FUMA and sectors of higher administration, in collegiate spaces in asymmetrical interaction relationships regarding the indigenous agenda, because there were no social agents in positions of power mobilized to enter this field of forces, which would promote a greater understanding of the specificities linked to the inclusion of indigenous students at FUMA.

This hierarchy of priorities cannot be understood as a deliberate, cynical and conscious construction on the part of field agents (Bourdieu, 2019), as it involves an automatic effect of belonging to the field and classification schemes incorporated by agents in the dialectical relationship with a hierarchical social structure, in which indigenous peoples were historically situated in a position of inferiority and traditionally outside the university field, and which within the scope of FUMA was manifested by strategies of secondary consideration of the indigenous agenda in discussion priorities.

Thus, during this process, the initial proposal for an affirmative action program at FUMA went through many reformulations and the vacancies destined for indigenous peoples were even, at one of these moments, completely removed from the proposal. As Pantoja (2007) demonstrates, the first ABSC-FUMA initiative included a percentage of 2% of the places in each course destined for indigenous people and during the reformulations of this proposal this percentage was removed and justified by the controversies about compensatory actions do not adapt to the context of indigenous peoples, based mainly on studies by professor Elisabeth Coelho, from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at FUMA.

In an analysis of affirmative actions for indigenous peoples in university education, professor Elisabeth Coelho (2006) demonstrates the biases of this process, as affirmative action policies in Brazil when aimed at indigenous peoples highlight a problem regarding making compensation synonymous with affirmation, as the sense of compensation is privileged, that is, of correcting discrimination against minority groups to mitigate their effects and guarantee effective equality of fundamental goods. But considering that indigenous peoples were here even before a Brazilian State, can we say that compensatory actions will enable the affirmation of their peoples with their specific and differentiated rationalities? What equality will be achieved for indigenous peoples with compensatory actions? Become equal to the hegemonic society?

For Coelho (2006), it is necessary to rethink the understanding of compensation for indigenous peoples, as placing indigenous societies as a minority group in Brazilian society is already a colonialist and oppressive way as it places them in a situation of inequalities in a cultural world different from the theirs, in a process of integrating the indigenous subject into Brazilian society, according to the forms of organization of the Brazilian State and only recognizing the plurinationality of its peoples as a secondary aspect. This challenge has not yet been faced even by the public policies and national guidelines that are being formulated, as they are based on the principle of diversity and the generic conception of "being Indian", without a dialogue with indigenous peoples and the intercultural process that permeate their existence.

These biases in the process and the controversies of whether or not to include indigenous peoples as beneficiaries of an affirmative action program at FUMA, added to the practically non-existent academic subfield at FUMA of forces mobilized for the cause, generated this scenario of secondary agenda and lack of deepening of the specific strategies that the university could adopt so that the inclusion of indigenous students at FUMA would not be merely compensatory or assimilationist, but rather affirmative and of continuity of its differentiated peoples.

Subsequently, this agenda returns in a few moments from isolated manifestations, such as from the Dean of Education, a social agent in a position of authority, in a concern not to follow a proposal for affirmative actions that only included some minority groups (blacks) to the detriment of others (indigenous) and some professors from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at FUMA, who signaled the need to invite scholars on the subject into the decision-making process. ABSC-FUMA agents accepted the suggestion and added the importance of also calling on indigenous peoples themselves to discuss and take a stance on the issue (Pantoja, 2007).

However, this call did not happen, and, without any broader debate with indigenous peoples, Resolution No. 501/2006 was unanimously approved in TREC, the first internal regulation to establish a policy of affirmative actions for black students, students from public schools, indigenous students or students with disabilities. This

initial regulation focused only on quotas, as permanence actions would be discussed at a later time by a Commission created to continue the complete Program, which also did not come to fruition (Oliveira; Menendez; Amaral, 2020).

In this first Resolution, two additional places were allocated in the Quota modality: one for students with disabilities and one for students who declare themselves indigenous (UFMA, 2006a). For selective candidates, according to DEED<sup>3</sup> Notice no. 85/2006 (UFMA, 2006b) and later TREC Resolution no. 568/2007, registration for vacancies reserved for indigenous people required a birth certificate issued by the National Indian Foundation – NIF and approval by a Commission designated by the University Rectory (UFMA, 2007). This first configuration also demonstrated the remnants of State protection and the responsibility of “identifying” who is or is not indigenous to state indigenous bodies and, as Baniwa (2019) demonstrates, these are conceptions based on the notion of cognitive, civil and legal incapacity of indigenous people who historically prevailed in the political models adopted by the Brazilian State.

Subsequently, with TREC Resolution No. 633/2008, the configuration of the distribution of vacancies would be transferred to the special category, but subtracted from the total and not as additional (UFMA, 2008). In 2009, FUMA joined the Unified National Selection System to access university education – UNSS, from the MEC, through TREC Resolution No. 677/2009, fully maintaining the current affirmative action policy (UFMA, 2009). This only changed with the enactment of Federal Law 12,711/2012 and the vacancies allocated to indigenous people were in the amount of 02 vacancies per course/class, 01 for indigenous students from public schools and 01 for indigenous students from public and low-income schools. With the Quota Law, FUMA begins to require indigenous quota candidates to self-declare ethnically (Brasil, 2012), creating opportunities for undue occupation of vacancies, which was only minimized with the establishment of an Ethnic Self-Declaration Verification Commission in 2018, to be explained in the next section.

### **3 Ethnic identity criteria and the implementation of the Self-Declaration Verification Commission: new clashes, new agents**

With Federal Law 12,711/2012 and the changes to the ethnic identity criterion required to compete for vacancies destined for indigenous people at FUMA, a new scenario of tension was installed in this subfield, involving new agents and new clashes around questions regarding the single requirement of ethnic self-declaration requested from candidates and the time lapse in the academic periods from 2013.1 to 2018.1 of monitoring to verify whether the occupation was in fact being carried out by indigenous people, a concern that came to light with the volume of reports of fraud

<sup>3</sup> Deen of Education. In portuguese, Pró-reitoria de Ensino.



and improper occupation of vacancies by non-indigenous, made via the Federal Public Ministry - FPM and with repercussions in the media in 2017.

The challenges faced in implementing a process of hetero-identification (identification by third parties of self-declared condition) associated with self-identification (personal and social construction of identity and self-perception) of candidates for affirmative policies was and is quite complex, considering the system's own problems of ethnic-racial classification of the Brazilian State, built under the effects of racism and a project to whiten and miscegenate the country. For a long time, the "Indigenous" category in the Demographic Censuses did not even appear in the color/race category. According to Dias Júnior and Verona (2018), in the 1872 and 1890 Censuses, indigenous people were part of the "cabloco" category, when considered "pure" and, later, in the 1940 Census, in the conglomerate of diverse people in the category "brown". In the 1960 Census, the category "Indian" appears, but only for indigenous people living in villages or indigenous posts. Only in the 1991 Census did the "Indigenous" category appear, which demonstrates the State's difficulty in considering indigenous peoples as populations to be identified in the country.

Silveira (2017) takes into account anthropological issues surrounding ethnic-racial identification and classification processes in Brazil and the criteria for classifying race/color/ethnicity bring to the Heteroidentification Boards the uncertainties of the Brazilian State and its limited way of categorizing the diversities present in Brazil, emerging unclassifiable types within the "brown" category, leaving the panel with the difficult task of establishing borders and criteria to be applied, often on an individualized basis (distinctive characteristics of the individual-citizen), in which moments of verification become spaces for negotiating ethnic-racial identities shared among everyone, which can lead to different criteria and results, depending on the members of the Panel, their organization and the historical-cultural context of the geographic region of each university.

Another challenge faced by the boards highlighted in the studies by Miranda, Souza and Almeida (2020) refers to the adoption of a logic of systematic suspicion that can generate legal uncertainty, in addition to embarrassment when classifying possible fraud against self-declared brown candidates, motivated by ancestry, but phenotypically with lighter skin, who were taught to self-perceive as black and to be proud of their identity and self-declared indigenous candidates, who migrated to cities and weakened their ties with their community of origin (often failing to obtain the required declarations by the bank). Therefore, more rigorous monitoring of the performance of these Panels becomes extremely important, as self-declaration is considered a fundamental human right by several international organizations and by the Statute of Racial Equality, firstly, its "relative presumption of veracity".

Identity self-declaration emerged as a result of demonstrations, within the scope of the black movement, of valuing the identity of the black population and, within the

scope of the indigenous movement, of responses to criticism of the State's guardianship of defining who is indigenous, in order to "guarantee the right of the group or member of the group to self-identify, without going through the mediation of any body or country interfering with native identity belonging" (Oliveira, 2020, p. 09).

However, in the way it was established in terms of the requirement for access to affirmative actions in higher education, based on the meritocratic and individualistic tradition of admission selections, self-declaration as a single requirement did not contemplate the principle of collectivity that governs indigenous and indigenous communities. their collective rights. For Baniwa (2019, p. 174), "there is nothing as individualistic as the principle of self-declaration, as it completely denies the collective and societal autonomy of indigenous peoples to say who is or is not a member of their collective".

Carneiro da Cunha (2012), from the perspective of social anthropology, understands that the criteria of ethnic groups associated with biological factors or associated with primary, intact or ancestral cultural forms have already been abandoned and replaced by criteria associated with an understanding of ethnic groups characterized by perceived distinction between themselves and the other groups with which they interact, in a process of ethnic affirmation of the group, which, even with cultural losses, guarantees its continuity and uniqueness. In this way, "the ethnic identity of an indigenous group is, therefore, exclusively a function of self-identification and identification by the surrounding society" (Carneiro da Cunha, 2012, p.109).

For Camilloto and Camilloto (2022), self-declaration is of the order of doing, it is the public manifestation of some aspect of self-identification that is of the order of being, subjective and private. The Heteroidentification Commissions would not have the role of suppressing or invalidating the self-identification of candidates, but only validating the self-declarations issued exclusively for access to affirmative policies in order to guarantee their integrity, with the committees being responsible for sensitivity in distinguishing situations of bad faith and situations of lack of racial literacy. In this way, the commissions would exercise an important mechanism of social control and prevention of fraud, whether intentional or not.

At FUMA, the action of social agents linked to the indigenous movement was preponderant, among which the indigenous leader João Arão Marizé Guajajara stands out, defender of indigenous peoples' access to higher education, around the allegations of fraud and responses demanded by the people Tenetehara/Gujajara, which had been carried out since 2007 without resolution, via the FPM and the media in 2017, to pressure the university to adopt administrative measures that would minimize quota fraud (Oliveira, 2020). This demonstrates the importance highlighted by Baniwa (2019) of recognizing the civil capacity of indigenous peoples and achieving

autonomy to defend their collective interests and rights in court, with the Public Prosecutor's Office being responsible, when called, for judicial defense actions.

Thus, the first measure taken by FUMA was the constitution of a Commission, through DEEN Ordinance No. 27/2017, to study models from other universities and make a proposal to verify indigenous identity in the entrance exams for FUMA courses. It was made up of a technician from DEEN, a professor from the Department of Anthropology and a legal advisor from FUMA (UFMA, 2017b). It is clear that they had no indigenous representatives and no concerns about understanding the possibilities of verifying indigenous identity, considering the specificities of the indigenous peoples of Maranhão.

In DEEN Notice nº 158/2017, FUMA invites the academic community and civil society to discuss these criteria, with a date of October 10, 2017 and invitations would be made to NFIP, the MPF, the Federal Public Defender's Office - FPD and the Federal Attorney's Office at FUMA/FAO, with a guaranteed speaking time of 10 minutes and up to 6 registrations via email by entities representing interested indigenous communities (UFMA, 2017c). It is observed at the university that social agents linked to higher administration did not take an active role in inviting indigenous entities. These, if they were aware of the audience, would need to register within a short established period, bearing their own travel costs. Invitations would be made to state bodies, mainly legal authorities. The priority of FUMA's concern was to meet the FPM's judicial demand, realizing once again the strategies of secondary dialogue with indigenous peoples, which would require understanding the specificities of the conditions of participation of these peoples, to discuss the criteria and hetero-identification requirements to be adopted.

This was a point of criticism made by the Commission, which felt overlooked in this process, as reported by Oliveira (2020, p.20):

The notice was published without consulting the Commission. We asked if it would be possible to request an errata to the notice, [...] After much insistence, it was decided on the need to inform the indigenous people of the notice by the institution itself through an invitation, recognizing the difficulty of them having access to a computer, and, even more so, Internet access[...]. However, the form of registration and the time would not be changed – a very clear way of barring the presence of Indians in a topic relating to them.

The difficulties of registration and participation of indigenous peoples resulted in only two registrations, one linked to the Guajajara people and the other to the Krikati people, who did not appear on the day, but were improvisely replaced by indigenous students present at the hearing. Also participating in an oral statement at the hearing were: DEEN/FUMA, FPM, UPDO<sup>4</sup>, NFIP, Federal Attorney's Office at FUMA, Indigenous

<sup>4</sup> Union Public Defender's Office. In portuguese, Defensoria Pública da União.

Missionary Council - IMC, teachers and students at FUMA, who, in general, converged regarding criticism of fraud and the criterion of ethnic self-declaration, with the MPF and UPDO expressing support for the adoption of other criteria, including the action of a specific Commission (Oliveira, 2020).

It is worth noting that the FPM and the UPDO, as legal institutions of control and power, with words of legitimized authority and, therefore, recognized by the interlocutors, were guided by the arguments adopted by the indigenous peoples, which motivated the opening of the civil recommendation inquiry. This generated greater weight for FUMA to finally establish new criteria and new measures.

These measures, initially, resulted in the publication of Ordinance GR nº 183/2018, for the composition of a specific Committee to verify their occupation in the 2018.1 academic period, with members representing DEEN, DFA<sup>5</sup>, the teaching staff and the student (indigenous) and support members representing NFIP, the National Council for Indigenous Policy and the Guajajara people (UFMA, 2018d) and then, in the publication of DEEN Notice nº 90/2018, with the call for these students to provide additional information and presentation of a "declaration original issued by the representative community of the indigenous people, signed by the chief, the teacher and also the health professional, attesting to the recognition of the student's ethnic-indigenous belonging" and/or "Original declaration issued by NFIP" (UFMA, 2018b). From the work of this Commission, as demonstrated by research by Amaral (2021), 87 students entering the 2018.1 academic period were summoned and only 49 presented documentation and attended interviews, and of these only one student was considered suitable, confirming the volume of undue occupation of vacancies during this period.

In a second moment, starting from the 2018.2 academic period, FUMA regulated the permanent role of the Ethnic Self-Declaration Verification Commission in selective admissions to undergraduate courses by TREC Resolution No. 1,710/2018 (UFMA, 2018a) and by DEEN Service Order No. 01/ 2018, starting to require in every selection process the verification of ethnic self-declaration and the original declaration of the respective indigenous community attesting to the ethnic-indigenous belonging declared by the candidate, signed by at least two indigenous Leaders (UFMA, 2018c). This verification would take place through individual interviews with the Commission and through consultation to prove the authenticity and veracity of the declaration with the indigenous peoples who issued it or entities linked to them (UFMA, 2018c). Since then, the Commission has been acting and, as a consequence, minimizing undue occupations and fraud.

<sup>5</sup> Dean of Student Affairs. In portuguese, Pró-reitoria de Assuntos Estudantis.



## 4 The first paths of change after the Commission

For more solid changes to take place in the academic field, the first way is important to guarantee the effective access of indigenous students to the university and avoid the usurpation of their places, a challenge to be faced mainly by the Commission for Verification of Ethnic Self-Declaration within the scope of FUMA, in a more active attitude on the part of the institution in monitoring the admission of students to places for indigenous people.

Therefore, this section will reflect on some implications of the implementation of this Commission, which, despite the contradictions that permeate a proposal to verify the ethnic identity of subjects, resulted in some changes in admission, in the occupation of vacancies and in the profile of those entering the vacancies intended for indigenous peoples. For this, the results of the analysis of data from the FUMA SIGAA Report, issued in March 2022, the entrance exam notices (2007 to 2009) and undergraduate admission regulation notices (2010 to 2021) were used, in addition to the regulations that regulated admission to undergraduate courses, in a descriptive statistical analysis.

Initially, an overview of admission data was made in the time frame from 2007 to 2021, based on the following variables: general quantity and by center/campus of entrants in vacancies destined for indigenous people; occupancy rate of indigenous vacancies offered and dropout rate in relation to occupied indigenous vacancies. The first objective is to analyze a general picture of the occupation of vacancies destined for indigenous people in the various centers/campi, the movement of larger and smaller numbers of entrants and the dropout rate, considering the admission policies of the period and assuming that the The Commission's actions would imply a drop in this occupation. Secondly, an analysis of entry data was carried out, considering two periods after the Quota Law: one before and one after the implementation of the Commission. The analysis sought to verify the following variables: courses with the highest occupancy rate and their dropout rates and profile of entrants in terms of place of birth and residence. The objectives of this second moment were to understand the possible changes in these variables within the same admission policy and the same number of academic periods, based on the Commission's actions and to reflect on the power of occupation and inclusion of indigenous students at the university within the courses most demanded by its people.

For the purposes of understanding the dropout rate, the concept of course evasion established by the Special Commission for Studies on Evasion in Brazilian Universities (Brazil, 1997) will be adopted, understood as a motivated dismissal when the student fails to enroll in a subject (abandonment), official withdrawal, transfer, change of course and exclusion from the course by institutional rule. Within the scope of FUMA, cases are registered as "cancelled" or "disconnected". Thus, the dropout rate

is the percentage of entrants to indigenous vacancies with cancelled registrations in relation to the total number of entrants to these vacancies. In other words, absolute data on new entrants and how many of them left or canceled their enrollment will be considered, regardless of the year. The vacancy rate is the percentage of entrants to vacancies allocated to indigenous people in relation to the total number of vacancies offered. In the first analysis, the following results were observed:

Table 1 - Vacancy occupancy rate and dropout rate, according to admission policy

Entrance policy	Description	Vacancies offered	Vacancies occupied	Occupation rate	Dropout rate
<b>Period 2007.1 to 2009.2</b> TREC Resolutions No. 501/2006 and No. 568/2007 CONSEPE Resolutions No. 633/2008 and No. 634/2008	1 place for indigenous people per course/semester; Self-declaration and birth certificate from NFIP required when registering for the selection; Validation by Special Committee; Local entrance exam;	301	8	2,65%	37,5%
<b>Period 2010.1 to 2012.2</b> TREC Resolutions No. 633/2008, No. 634/2008 and No. 677/2009 (Adherence to USS)	1 place for indigenous people per course/semester; Self-declaration and birth certificate from NFIP upon registration; Validation by Special Committee; NHSE/USS;	359	33	9,19%	57,57%
<b>Period 2013.1 to 2018.1</b> Federal Law 12,711/12 TREC Resolution No. 677/2009 (Adherence to USS)	2 semester places per course, 1 for an indigenous public school student and 1 for an indigenous public school student with a per capita family income of up to 1.5 salaries; Ethnic self-declaration; NHSE/USS;	1468	949	64,64%	59%
<b>Period 2018.2 to 2021.2</b> Federal Law 12,711/12 TREC Resolutions No. 677/2009 and No. 1710/2018 DEEN service order nº 01/2018	Same as the previous period, but with a declaration signed by two indigenous leaders, video and analysis by the Ethnic Self-Declaration Verification Commission.	1006	107	10,63%	21,49%

Source: own preparation, based on internal regulations, entrance exam notices, entry regulation notices and IAAMS<sup>6</sup> indigenous entrant report (FUMA, 2022).

<sup>6</sup> Integrated Academic Activities Management System. In portuguese, Sistema Integrado de Gestão de Atividades Acadêmicas (SIIGA).

In the academic periods from 2007.1 to 2009.2, a low percentage of entrants in the university's indigenous places prevailed, as it was the first experience within a space characterized by little mobilization of dialogue with the indigenous of Maranhão and the requirement for a certificate issued by NFIP, validated by a Special Commission. Even though the occupancy rate was negligible, at 2.65%, it is worth highlighting that of these 08 students who entered, 05 completed their courses and 03 canceled their registrations. The courses required at this first moment were Medicine and Law, at the São Luís Campus, and Social Communication – Journalism, at the Imperatriz Campus.

In the periods from 2010.1 to 2012.2, FUMA, by joining USS, no longer held its own entrance exam as a requirement for the entrance selection process. Students used the averages obtained in NHSE<sup>7</sup> and competed via SISU. This generated greater openness to changes of course, due to the possibility of choosing a second course option by the candidate. It is also noteworthy that until 2007 only the São Luís, Imperatriz and Chapadinha campuses were open, and with SPREPFU<sup>8</sup> and the interiorization policy, six other campuses were created, also expanding the offer of places to indigenous people. All of these conditions can explain this slight increase in the number of new entrants and the vacancy rate during this period. Of the 33 incoming students, 12 completed their studies, 02 remain active and 19 canceled their enrollments, that is, despite the increase in the number of incoming students, the dropout rate reaches a rate of 57.57%.

An important point to be highlighted is that, with USS, the possibilities of access for indigenous from other states of the Federation are expanded, as the NHSE tests are taken in the city of origin or in closer cities. This is noticed at FUMA, from 2010 onwards, with an intake of 6 indigenous students from other units of the Federation, such as Amazonas, Pernambuco, Roraima and Mato Grosso do Sul, from 2010.1 to 2012.2.

From 2013.1 to 2018.1, with all 9 campuses in force and with the Quota Law, there was a sharp increase in the number of entrants in indigenous vacancies, this can be explained by the greater number of vacancies offered, but mainly by the flexibility of requirements for access to the vacancy, which no longer required a NFIP birth certificate, now requiring only ethnic self-declaration from candidates. There were a total of 949 new students in these vacancies, with 140 students completing their courses, 231 remain active, 539 canceled their enrollment, 21 left the course and 18 stopped their enrollment. This was a critical period for the University, as even though the vacancy rate was higher during this period (around 65.64%), this does not imply that they were effectively occupied by indigenous people, according to the study by Amaral (2021) demonstrated.

<sup>7</sup> National High School Exam. In portuguese, Exame Nacional de Ensino Médio (ENEM).

<sup>8</sup> Support Program for Restructuring and Expansion Plans of Federal Universities. In portuguese, Programa de Apoio a Planos de Reestruturação e Expansão das Universidades Federais (REUNI).

From the academic period of 2018.2 to 2021.2 there was a sudden drop in this number of entrants, with the beginning of the work of the Ethnic Self-Declaration Verification Commission. The occupancy rate of 10.63% may signal that the Commission's actions had a significant impact in minimizing undue occupations, as the requirement for a declaration from two indigenous leaders attesting that the candidate is a member of their people was one of the documents analyzed by the Commission may have inhibited possible ineligible candidates from making attempts to take over just by self-declaration.

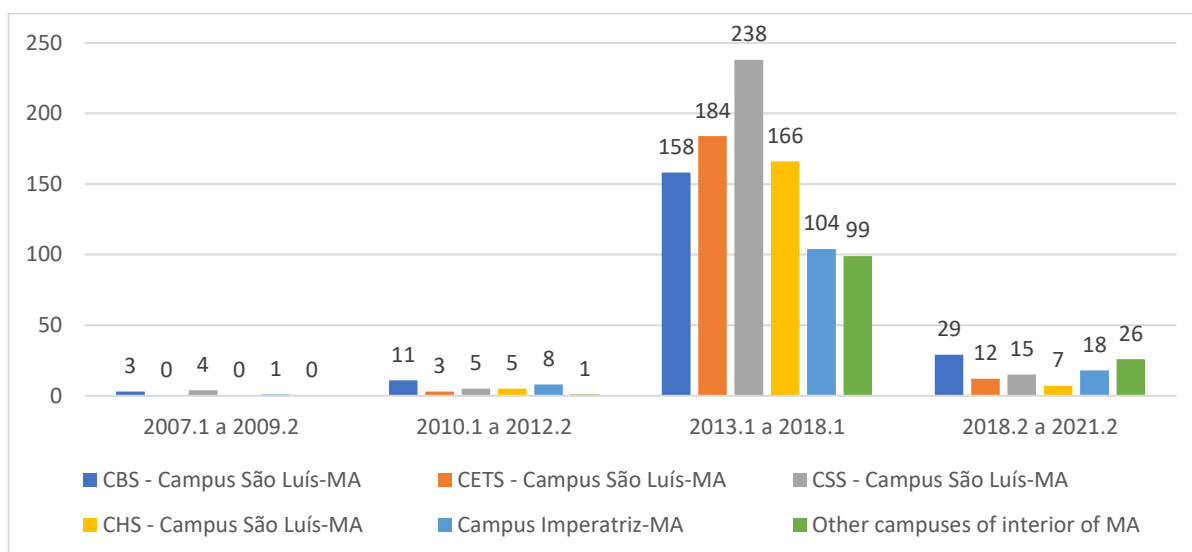
However, it is necessary to reflect on whether this drop may be related, even if to a lesser extent, to the disqualification of indigenous students who migrated to the city, weakened their ties with their community of origin and did not have their declarations signed by two leaders or by indigenous students residing in communities that have not obtained "recognition" by the State or by Brazilian society as indigenous people. Could it be that these students are not or are no longer indigenous? Could it be that these students do not correspond to the beneficiaries of affirmative policies? These are necessary reflections to be made by the university in relation to the borders and ethnic identity criteria adopted by the Commission.

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the conditions of the pandemic period experienced since 2020 and the Bolsonaro government itself, which made significant changes to the NHSE, including generating a lower overall percentage of participants. The fact that FUMA does not offer any specific strategy in the selection process, such as, for example, its own indigenous entrance exam or support for taking the tests, may be a hindrance to the participation of indigenous people in the selection process.

It is known that the university, as a school institution, still legitimizes the dominant culture of the dominant classes, with this cultural capital being required within it and in the NHSE exams themselves, which becomes an obstacle to those who are not familiar with this culture. (Bourdieu, 2015). The dropout rate in relation to vacancies filled in this period already reaches a percentage of 21.49%, although it may seem lower than the other rates in previous periods, the shorter period of time for possible dropout problems must be considered. In analyzing the occupation of these vacancies in FUMA centers/campuses, it is observed:



Graph 1 – Number of entrants in vacancies destined for indigenous people



Source: own elaboration, based on report of indigenous entrants to IAAMS (FUMA, 2022).

On the campus of São Luís - MA, in the time frame from 2007 to 2012, the largest numbers of entrants were from the Center for Biological Sciences - CBS and the Center for Social Sciences - CSS, generally having the Medicine Course - CBS and the Course of Law - CSS as the courses with the largest number of entrants, with a total of 07 entrants in each of them. As of 2013.1, with the Quota Law and ethnic self-declaration as the only requirement, occupations are being spread across practically all courses, centers and campuses. In the period from 2018.2 to 2021.2, the distribution of vacancies is again similar to the period before the Quota Law and the CCBS once again has a greater number of new entrants, followed by the CSS.

For a better understanding of the differences in terms of demands and interests of indigenous peoples in FUMA courses, the second moment of analysis follows, with the division into two periods post-Quota Law: one before and one after the Verification Commission's actions. of Ethnic Self-Declaration, corresponding respectively to the periods from 2015.1 to 2018.1 and 2018.2 to 2021.2. In the period from 2015.1 to 2018.1, all courses in force at the time had entrants in vacancies destined for indigenous people, while in the period from 2018.2 to 2021.2, forty courses did not even have entrants in these vacancies. In analyzing the occupation data of the courses most demanded by its people, the following results were observed when comparing the two periods:

Table 2 – Occupancy rate and dropout rate per course before and after the Commission

Course	2015.1 to 2018.1				2018.2 to 2021.2			
	Vacancies offered	Vacancies occupied	Occupancy rate	Dropout rate	Vacancies offered	Vacancies occupied	Occupancy rate	Dropout rate
Medicine – CBS C. São Luís	14	14	100%	14,28%	14	12	85,71%	16,66%
Odontology – CBS C. São Luís	14	14	100%	42,85%	14	11	78,57%	9,09%
Law – CSS C. São Luís (2 Classes)	28	27	96,42%	37,03%	28	10	35,71%	10%
Medicine – C. Pinheiro	12	12	100%	50%	12	09	75%	11,11%
Medicine – C. Imperatriz	14	14	100%	28,57%	14	07	50%	4,28%
Human Science – Geography – C. Grajaú	06	06	100%	66,66%	08	06	75%	16,66%
Natural science – Chemistry C. Grajaú	06	03	50%	100%	08	04	50%	0%
Nursing – C. Imperatriz	14	14	100%	50%	14	04	28,57%	0%
Law – C. Imperatriz	14	14	100%	37,71%	14	03	21,42%	0%
Physics – CCET – C. São Luís (2 turmas)	22	09	40,90%	66,66%	30	03	10%	100%
Nursing – CBS C. São Luís	14	14	100%	57,14%	14	02	14,28%	50%

Source: own preparation, based on entry regulation notices (2015 to 2021) and IAAMS indigenous entrants report (FUMA, 2022)

During the period with the Commission, the Medicine, Dentistry and Law courses at the São Luís Campus, Medicine at the Pinheiro Campus and Medicine at the Imperatriz Campus maintained a greater number of entrants in vacancies reserved for indigenous people. It is worth highlighting that these are strategic areas of action for indigenous peoples, as indigenous health and the fight for collective rights are constant agendas in the demands of their peoples. The Nursing courses at the São Luís Campus and Nursing and Law at the Imperatriz Campus, which in the period without a Commission had an occupancy rate of 100%, after the Commission it changed to occupancy rates that did not exceed 30%. Of the campuses on the continent, the Human Sciences/Geography and Natural Sciences/Chemistry courses at the Grajaú Campus, during the period with the Commission, are the ones that receive the most

indigenous entrants. This occupation rate may be due to the existence of many indigenous lands in the areas of this municipality.

Another important aspect to be highlighted concerns the nationality of those entering the indigenous vacancies. It was observed that in the period without a Commission, 68.12% (n=451) were from São Luís, capital of the state of Maranhão, 25.98% (n=172) were from other municipalities in Maranhão and 5.89% (n=39) from other states. Of the latter, 15 students from municipalities in Pará and the rest from municipalities in Minas Gerais (3), Pernambuco (3), Bahia (3), Piauí (3), São Paulo (2), Goiás (1), Roraima (1), Amazonas (1), Ceará (1), Rio Grande do Norte (1), Paraíba (1), Rio de Janeiro (1) and also Brasília-DF (2).

In the period with the Commission, the highest percentage, 40.18% (n=43), included students not from the capital, but from municipalities in the interior of Maranhão. The remainder corresponds to 32.71% (n=35) from São Luís - MA, and 27.10% (n=29) from municipalities in other states, but with less diversity of states than in the period without the Commission, as, Of these, 22 students are from municipalities in the state of Pernambuco and the rest only from municipalities in the state of Bahia (2), Amazonas (2), Mato Grosso do Sul (2) and Minas Gerais (1). Students from other states in both periods take up places in high-demand courses, such as Medicine, Law, Dentistry and Nursing.

As for the data on students who registered "village, land or indigenous reserve" in their address, in the period without a Commission there was a negligible number of 5 students, corresponding to 0.75% of the total number of entrants for indigenous places. The 5 students, all male, from Grajaú-MA, took up places on courses at the Grajaú Campus. They reported a street in the villages of Arymy, Piquizinho and Morro Branco, in Grajaú/MA, all linked to the Guajajara ethnic group. Of these 5 students, 4 canceled their enrollment and only 1 maintains active status.

During the period with the Commission, 31 students registered a place in indigenous villages, totaling a percentage of 28.97% of the total number of entrants for indigenous vacancies, of which 18 were female and 13 were male. In other words, with a much smaller number of entrants in these vacancies, a much higher percentage of students who registered places on indigenous lands. It is noteworthy that 14 villages mentioned are located on indigenous lands in the municipality of Grajaú/MA, 05 villages in the municipality of Arame/MA, 03 in the municipality of Jenipapo dos Vieiras/MA, 02 in the municipality of Barra do Corda/MA and the others 07 villages located in municipalities in other states, mainly Pernambuco. Of these 31 students, 28 are active, 01 are enrolled and 02 have withdrawn from the course.

Even though more studies are still needed, considering these initial results, we can signal that the Commission's actions resulted in a decrease in the occupation rate, however, the data on the profile of entrants indicate that this occupation is in fact being

carried out by indigenous people, minimizing undue occupations by those who do not have the right. On the other hand, the university needs to reflect on these low occupancy rates and high dropout rates, as inertia in understanding the reasons that generated these rates could be another strategy of the social agents who move this subfield towards preserving the current structure and, as Bourdieu and Champagne (2015) show us, the apparent democratization of education can hide the maintenance of the differential structure of school benefits and correlative social benefits, "diluted in duration, the institution is inhabited, permanently, by potential excluded people who introduce in it the contradictions and conflicts associated with a schooling whose only objective is itself" (Bourdieu; Champagne, 2015, p. 247). In other words, access is expanded, but the covert strategies for maintaining the university structure end up silently expelling these students.

## 5 Final considerations

The university has been undergoing progressive changes regarding access for students from historically excluded social groups, via affirmative action policy, but there is still a long way for this academic field to change the deeper structures of power relations established within it. The first paths are already being followed and the access of indigenous peoples to this field can drive new processes of struggle and structural changes, whether in pedagogical, curricular, administrative and/or decision-making areas.

It is true that the entry of indigenous students into higher education is not without conflicts, as, on the one hand, there is an education format largely shaped by a hegemonic culture, yet with few spaces for critical intercultural dialogue, that questions its historical construction of the hierarchical social structure and on the other hand, the demands of indigenous movements for higher education that can guarantee dialogue with university knowledge, without this training promoting a rupture with their own cultures and their own forms of social organization and construction of knowledge, of in order to obtain tools to lead the struggles in a (Brazilian) society that is still advancing and crushing its people.

Thus, within the scope of FUMA, to date, there has not yet been a broad and in-depth debate between the university and indigenous peoples, which would result in a solid and articulated proposal for the inclusion of indigenous students in the institution. It is observed that the process of implementing affirmative actions aimed at indigenous people at FUMA is much more the result of clashes and struggles arising from external pressure, mainly from social movements, indigenous leaders, legal entities of social control and even government demands than the university's own initiatives to reflect on indigenous demands, configuring FUMA's stance to be much more reactive than active in its propositions.



Furthermore, FUMA's proposals, such as the implementation of an Ethnic Self-Declaration Verification Commission in the admission policy, are still mainly focused on student access within the homogenizing proposal of Law 12,711/2012 (Brasil, 2012), requiring greater studies to reflect and understand indigenous realities, in order to establish more specific strategies considering the particularities of their people, who face difficulties, from traveling to take the NHSE tests to the conditions of staying within the institution.

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