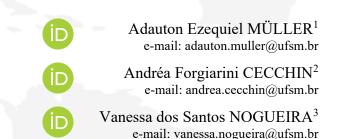# DIGITAL INCLUSION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: REFLECTIONS ABOUT ACTIONS IN THE STUDENT ASSISTANCE FIELD

INCLUSÃO DIGITAL NA EDUCAÇÃO SUPERIOR: REFLEXÕES SOBRE AS AÇÕES NO CAMPO DA ASSISTÊNCIA ESTUDANTIL

INCLUSIÓN DIGITAL EN LA EDUCACIÓN SUPERIOR: REFLEXIONES SOBRE LAS ACCIONES EN EL ÁMBITO DE LA ATENCIÓN AL ESTUDIANTE

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ABSTRACT: This article presents a piece of research entitled "Student Assistance and Digital Inclusion: a study about actions at UFSM", linked to the Postgraduate Program in Public Policy and Educational Management at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM). It aims to discuss the relevance of digital inclusion actions and their repercussions in face of the social, educational, and digital inequalities in the context of Digital Inclusion. From Literature Review, it was verified that Student Assistance is a public policy that enables conditions for the permanence of students in public Higher Education and it has enhanced modifications concerning inequality in access opportunities, permanence, and conclusions of the degree courses. However, it points out its complexity and the need for action promotions in the several themes described in the National Educational Assistance Plan, and its articulations with other actions in the university. From the digital inclusion perspective, it highlighted the need for a greater debate and the institution's prioritization.

KEYWORDS: Student assistance. Higher education. Digital inclusion. Social vulnerability.

RESUMO: *Este artigo apresenta um recorte da pesquisa intitulada "Assistência Estudantil e Inclusão Digital: um estudo sobre as ações na UFSM", vinculada ao Programa de Pós-graduação em Políticas Públicas e Gestão Educacional, da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria. Objetiva discutir a relevância das ações de inclusão digital e seus desdobramentos frente às desigualdades social, educacional e digital no contexto da Assistência Estudantil. A partir de revisão de literatura, verifica-se que a Assistência Estudantil é uma política pública que oportuniza condições para a permanência dos estudantes na educação superior pública e tem potencializado modificações em relação à desigualdade de oportunidades de acesso, permanência e conclusão dos cursos. Entretanto, sinaliza a complexidade e a necessidade de promoção de ações nos diversos eixos do Programa Nacional de Assistência Estudantil e a sua articulação com outras ações da universidade. Na perspectiva da inclusão digital, evidencia a necessidade de um maior debate e priorização pelas instituições.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Assistência estudantil. Educação superior. Inclusão digital. Vulnerabilidade social.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo presenta un extracto de la investigación titulada "Atención al Estudiante e Inclusión Digital: un estudio sobre las acciones en la UFSM", vinculada al Programa de Posgrado en Políticas Públicas y Gestión Educativa, de la Universidad Federal de Santa María. Tiene como objetivo discutir la pertinencia de las acciones de inclusión digital y sus repercusiones frente a las desigualdades sociales, educativas y digitales en el contexto de la Atención al Estudiante. A partir de una revisión bibliográfica, se desprende que la Asistencia Estudiantil es una política pública, que ofrece condiciones para que los estudiantes permanezcan en la educación superior pública y ha potenciado cambios con relación a la desigualdad de oportunidades de acceso, permanencia y finalización de estudios. Sin embargo, señala la complejidad y la necesidad de impulsar acciones en los diversos ejes del Plan Nacional de Atención al Estudiante y su articulación con otras acciones universitarias. Desde la perspectiva de la inclusión digital, destaca la necesidad de un mayor debate y priorización por parte de las instituciones.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Atención al estudiante. Educación superior. Inclusión digital. Vulnerabilidad social.*

Introduction

The debate on digital inclusion and the need to implement public policies in this field has become more important today. In evidence since March 2020, a new world scenario in which people were forced to quickly modify their ways of living, feeling, relating, working, thinking and studying, defined from the urgent need for isolation/social distancing to avoid the contagion of a new serious disease. The Coronavirus pandemic (SARS-Cov-2) has repercussions in this period, which over time has proved to be a highly infectious disease and which became popularly known as Covid-19.

Given this scenario, in the field of education, more specifically in higher education, the Federal Institutions of Higher Education (IFES) are driven to seek measures for the continuity of teaching, research and extension activities, in order to guarantee, at least, the continuity of the teaching and learning process. In this way, remote teaching systems are quickly organized that, through the use of technologies, allow classes, lectures, lives, events, among others, to be held online and, with this, allow the maintenance and continuity of the year teaching in institutions.

Such activities carried out online significantly modified daily life and relationships in the context of the university. A new pace, much more intense, accelerated and strenuous, presents itself to those involved in learning, as well as demands significant changes in the way of carrying out the educational process.

However, according to Tenório, Ferreira e Souza (2021, p. 96, our translation):

> [...] remote learning adopted as a strategy to guarantee access to education in times of a pandemic reaffirms that even with the formulation of public policies aimed at reducing social inequalities and contributing to the formation of a society that promotes social justice, it still does not are sufficient, since a large part of the population does not have access to the internet or to the technological resources currently used to promote education.

According to the authors, with the advent of remote teaching, the emerging need for massive use of technologies is evident. This reveals the inequalities between those who have access and portions of students unable to follow the proposed activities. In this way, the IFES, as a way of minimizing these inequalities, are forced to promote public policies for access to technological resources, through the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES).

In this sense, the IFES make efforts to provide new measures that allow the digital inclusion of students and their consequent permanence in the activities provided by the courses.

Thus, in the context of higher education in times of a pandemic, a set of new dynamics is established within universities, in which technology occupies greater importance and necessity.

When thinking about this perspective, we agree with Marcon and Mallagi (2021), that the educational dynamic adopts a greater inherence to digital network technologies in society and at school, causing intense connectivity and provoking a greater need for access and appropriation of technologies in life students' social life.

However, in this context, with marked inequalities, the question that emerges is: how to provide the connectivity and access necessary for students assisted by the PNAES for their effective participation in learning contexts and to materialize their training process, impacting on social, educational inequalities and existing digital?

The aim is to answer this question based on research within the scope of national scientific production, in which writings that could contribute and support this debate were investigated. In this way, a literature review was carried out based on searches in the Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) and in the Journal Portal of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES).

When considering the approach developed in the research, the thought of Yin (2016, p. 55, our translation) stands out, describing that:

> The main purpose of selective review is to sharpen your preliminary considerations about the study topic, method and data source. Rather than taking a broader perspective and reporting what you know about a topic (which would be the subject of a more comprehensive review), your goal is to review and report in more detail on a specific range of previous studies directly addressing your likely topic of study, method and source of data.

In this sense, the literature review was also adopted to try to answer other questions related to Master's research, linked to the Postgraduate Program in Public Policy and Educational Management (PPPG-UFSM), Professional Master's Degree, at the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM), entitled "Student Assistance and digital inclusion: a study on actions at UFSM". This study, still in progress, aims to "analyze the digital inclusion actions related to the institutional policy of Student Assistance at UFSM, seeking to understand its importance and what is its influence on the permanence of students in the institution".

It is believed that the debate on Student Assistance (AE) and Digital Inclusion (ID) can contribute to discussions on the subject and give visibility to this action of the AE policy, emerging in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, which had its accentuated importance in the higher education scenario due to the adoption of remote teaching by the IFES. In addition, the

research is justified by the possibility of highlighting the importance of ID as a device that, in addition to other AE resources, enhances the guarantee of student permanence and can be considered essential for minimizing social, digital and educational inequalities, nowadays.

This article aims to discuss the relevance of actions in the field of digital inclusion and its influence to minimize social, educational and digital inequalities in the context of Student Assistance, having public higher education as a scenario and as a background the actions foreseen by the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES).

For a better systematization, the text was structured as follows: the Introduction that presents the context of the subject of study, the problem and the objective of the research, in addition to the justification; the second part, which shows the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES): a policy under construction, which seeks to reflect on the policy and its complexity; the third part, which addresses digital inclusion in the context of the PNAES and points to the emergence of digital inclusion among the actions of the Student Assistance policy, highlighting its current importance for the effectiveness of guaranteeing the permanence of students. Finally, in the final considerations, we try to indicate some reflections/concerns about the study.

The National Student Assistance Program (PNAES): a policy under construction

The National Student Assistance Program (PNAES), which is the result of the struggle of social and student movements and was instituted by Decree 7234, of July 19, 2010, is consolidated in the perspective of a right for students in social vulnerability and "[...] aims to expand the conditions for young people to remain in federal public higher education" (BRASIL, 2010, np).

According to Silva (2016), the PNAES enhances the access and permanence of students in Public Higher Education. For this author:

> It can be said that the program seeks to expand and democratize the conditions of access and permanence of young people in federal public higher education; minimize the effects of social inequalities with regard to effective access (access, permanence and completion of the course) to higher education and contribute to the promotion of social inclusion through education. It appears that the PNAES was a significant democratic advance that differs from the logic contained in the legislation that was being constructed, since student assistance is conceived as a right of students in situations of social vulnerability, guaranteed by specific resources, understanding of the needs of students is expanded, as well as the actions offered to supply them, as well as due to its own materialization based on democratic and citizenship principles (SILVA, 2016, p. 56, our translation).

From this author's perspective, the PNAES has enabled better conditions for students to remain in public higher education and has enhanced changes in relation to unequal opportunities in access, permanence and completion of courses.

In the same sense, Crosara and Silva (2020, p. 34, our translation) indicate that Student Assistance has conquered its space in relation to the right to education, mainly "because it is an important mechanism to guarantee the permanence and completion of higher education, insofar as it promotes better conditions for economically vulnerable students in their university career". According to these authors, when the most vulnerable people manage to overcome obstacles that do not exist for those belonging to higher social strata, equity is promoted, providing opportunities for both groups to remain in university and complete higher education, "fulfilling several objectives of Brazilian democracy constant in Article 3 of the Constitution" (CROSARA; SILVA, 2020, p. 34, our translation).

In a brief analysis of the works researched in the literature review presented here, it is verified that the PNAES represents an important advance. However, it is observed that among the challenges of permanence are the complexity of Student Assistance and the need to promote actions in the different axes of the Program, as well as its articulation with other actions in the context of the university.

With regard to the complexity that was indicated from the results of the literature review, it is believed that it resides in the perception that the IFES had a significant change in their service profile for the field of Student Assistance, through the adoption of the Examination National High School (ENEM) and the Unified Selection System (SISU) for their university admission systems, considering their recent expansion context, as Andifes clarifies:

> The democratization of access to higher education, resulting from the increase in the number of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (IFES), courses and vacancies, the internalization of the campuses of the same institutions, greater territorial mobility via ENEM/SISU and the reservation of vacancies for students originating in public schools, through quotas (Income, PPI – blacks, browns and indigenous peoples - and People with Disabilities), radically changed the profile of the recent generation of students in undergraduate courses at federal universities and Cefets MG and RJ (BRASIL, 2019, p. 2, our translation).

In addition, it should be noted that the mobility provided by the SISU has also changed the reality of the IFES and their daily lives, and has demanded greater investments and funding from the Federal Government in the field of AE actions, in addition to having caused important structural changes in the functioning of this policy, in the sense of serving the student population in their demands (housing, food, transportation, health care, etc.) to guarantee the conditions of permanence at the university. This dynamic relationship between the increased demand for actions and the need for greater funding, in a context adopted by the Federal Government, of cuts in resources for the field of Education, becomes a major institutional challenge for the management of resources in the daily life of the IFES.

According to Perske (2020, p. 116, our translation): "[...] This is an increasingly frequent situation at IFES, being a challenge both for students and educational institutions, as keeping students becomes more complex than providing them with access".

As the author indicates, keeping students in their courses, in this context of cuts and restrictions in Student Assistance funding, challenges students with socioeconomic vulnerability and educational institutions in the search for new ways of acting to overcome such difficulties. These issues reflect on the completion of courses and the development of the learning process; therefore, they indicate the need for attention and require measures to modify/expand the possibilities of support that have been provided by the IFES.

In the same sense, Pozobon (2019, p. 74, our translation) comments that:

> [...] it is worth remembering that it is the transfer of resources that effectively allows the AE policy to be implemented and guarantees the necessary institutional conditions for the attendance of students and the effectiveness of what is proposed. Without State investments in human and material financial resources, there is no guarantee of social rights, even if these rights are constituted in legislation.

The author warns about the importance of the issue of Student Assistance financing and the transfer of resources for the effectiveness of the policy in its role of guaranteeing the institutional conditions for the permanence of students.

With regard to funding, Crosara and Silva (2020) indicate that, currently, there is already an insufficient budgetary-financial allocation, with regard to the student socioeconomic reality (demand) predominant in the IFES, which is combined with the reduction in their values, whether in real or even nominal economic terms.

Another element that contributes to the complexity of AE today is the organization that comes from the process of Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities, instituted by Decree nº. 6,096, of April 24, 2007 (BRASIL, 2007a), the so-called REUNI. It was positive as it expanded the possibility of physical, academic and pedagogical expansion of the federal higher education network. However, according to Silva (2016, p. 39, our translation):

> With REUNI, the quota policies and the increase in resources in these institutions, the number of students from the popular segments grew, as well as the student assistance actions aimed at assisting them. Therefore, the significant advance in the expansion of public higher education is undeniable, however, its trajectory shows a path that does not lead to its universalization, but to a great expansion of the education market.

This expansion process resulted in a considerable expansion of vacancies for Higher Education. According to data from the V National Survey of Socioeconomic and Cultural Profile of 2018 IFES Graduates:

> The growth in the number of vacancies is directly related to the opening of new federal institutions of higher education. 18 new IFES were created in the period from 2005 to 2017, covering four of the five regions of the country. There was a 40% growth in the percentage of federal universities in the country, with more significant values in the South region, followed by the Northeast region. In terms of new campuses opened in the same expansion process, there were 148 in 2002, reaching 408 in 2017, registering a growth of 176% in fifteen years. In regional terms, the Northeast and North led the expansion (BRASIL, 2019, p. 5, our translation).

However, data contained in the same report and on the expansion of the IFES show that previous research already indicated a change in the profile of policy users and the perception on the part of the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (ANDIFES) and the Forum National de Deans of Student Assistance (FONAPRACE) of the challenges in relation to difficulties related to the maintenance of permanence policies, considering the rapid change in the profile of IFES students and the mismatch between the volume of resources allocated to the area. (BRASIL, 2019). Also contributing to the complexity of AE is the fact that it:

> [...] is already born focused and residual, aimed at students belonging to the working class and, due to this condition, facing, in their subjective living conditions, difficulties to remain in higher education - characteristics inherited from the process of institutionalization of social assistance as a right in Brazilian society (MOCELIN, 2019, p. 250, our translation).

Such subjective living conditions, which make it difficult for students to remain at the university, as the author points out, are what make visible the need and importance of carrying out concrete actions in all areas provided for in the PNAES, with emphasis, currently, on those of inclusion digital.

In this way, the PNAES provides for the implementation of actions in several areas. Among the tasks foreseen in its implementation are:

> Art. 3rd. [...] § 1 The PNAES student assistance actions must be developed in the following areas: I - student housing; II - food; III - transportation; IV - health care; V- digital inclusion; VI - culture; VII - sport; VIII- kindergarten; IX - pedagogical support; and X- access, participation and learning of students with disabilities, pervasive developmental disorders and high abilities and giftedness (BRASIL, 2010, our translation).

It should be noted that each IFES has autonomy to develop actions, acting from its own regulations in institutional resolutions. Such norms enable institutional commitments with the main objectives of the policy, in the sense of guaranteeing the access and permanence of students, and what is verified is that concrete actions in all areas are fundamental in the composition of the necessary resources for students, regarding the guarantee of their permanence at the University.

A common point between the texts analyzed is the perception that it is a public policy that has great potential to strengthen and guarantee the permanence of students in public higher education and minimize inequalities, enabling equal opportunities for all students.

In this way, Student Assistance constitutes a set of fundamental actions for the realization of the right to education. According to Crosara e Silva, (2020, p. 16, our translation):

> [...] its national origin dates back to the beginning of the 20th century, completing, in 2018, ninety years. Despite its presence in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), even today it is not regulated by infraconstitutional federal legislation as a national policy.

Thus, the PNAES is understood as a policy that is still under construction, considering the transformations undergone in its trajectory since its creation through Normative Ordinance nº 39/2007 (BRASIL, 2007b) of the Ministry of Education (MEC) until its current validity through Decree no. 7,234/2010 (BRASIL, 2010).

This assertion comes from the perception that for its consolidation as a public policy, it becomes extremely important to modify its condition, fragile and uncertain, from a decree to its enactment in the form of a law.

In addition, it is clear that this construction of the policy takes place in the daily life of higher education, through changes in the demands of students, similar to what happened due to the pandemic with digital inclusion. Once this action became visible in this context, it proved to be essential for the permanence of students, moving institutions towards its implementation.

Digital inclusion in the context of the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES)

In times of networked society, digital technologies have increasingly become an important element that provide significant changes in our ways of living, thinking, communicating and studying. In this way, digital inclusion becomes part of our vocabulary and appears in the context of public policies (PISCHETOLA, 2016).

In the perspective of this article, having the public policy of Student Assistance as a context, digital inclusion constitutes an important device for the transformation of subjects and for their empowerment in relation to the guarantee of rights. In this way, access to information by civil society becomes essential, and it has been identified as one of the means for the development of both the creative and intellectual potential of individuals (NEVES, 2019). This has allowed the subjects, from the opportunity of access to equipment, technology and the network society, to contribute to the transformations of society.

Recently, due to the pandemic that caused the entire social structure (health, work, education, etc.) to be impacted with relevant changes and adaptations, especially with regard to the way we relate as a society, it is undeniable that these changes reveal the difficult reality of millions of Brazilians, especially with regard to education. This is evident in the adherence of educational institutions to remote teaching as a way to guarantee the continuity of the school year and the right to education, in the technological inequality, which comes from the digital divide (TENÓRIO; FERREIRA; SOUZA, 2021).

When looking at Student Assistance and digital inclusion, discussed more directly, using the association of the descriptors "student assistance *and* digital inclusion", it is observed that in the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) there is no specific production on the subject in the databases available on the Capes Journal Portal: it is possible to find the publication of only one article on the subject in the last five years.

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This study, authored by Jackeline Soares Lima (2021), conducts a reflective examination on the actions of Student Assistance, contextualizing the presentation of the implementation process of an unprecedented public notice for digital inclusion in the scenario of the University of Brasília (UNB).

The fact that there is no production on the subject shows that it is emerging in the context already presented about the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, and that it mobilizes higher education in the sense of urgency in the implementation of public policies for digital inclusion.

This perception is corroborated by the fact that the "V National Survey of the Socioeconomic and Cultural Profile of IFES Graduates - 2018" does not contain broader or more in-depth analyzes of digital inclusion, unlike what happens with the other areas of activity of the PNAES. This study was conceived by the Observatory of the National Forum of Pro-Rectors of Student Affairs – FONAPRACE and carried out by the Federal University of Uberlândia. It should be noted that this report presents digital inclusion as "Programs that enable access to devices such as computers, tablets or courses, scholarships or financial aid" (BRASIL, 2019, p. 132) and makes no reference to other actions or initiatives beyond the access to equipment as digital inclusion measures.

Below you can see the percentage of undergraduates by geographic region of the campus, according to their participation in Student Assistance program actions (in %) – 2018 (Chart 1):

Chart 1 - Graduates by geographic region of *campus*, according to participation in Student Assistance program actions (in %) - 2018

Programs/Actions	North	North East	Southeast	South	Midwest	National
Food	9,3	14,4	18,4	26,0	17,3	17,3
Home	4,2	7,8	8,0	10,6	4,2	7,5
Psychological support	1,9	2,5	3,9	4,1	1,7	3,0
Pedagogical support	0,8	1,0	1,1	1,9	0,3	1,1
Medical care	2,0	3,3	3,7	2,8	0,6	2,9
dental care	0,9	1,7	2,5	2,2	0,5	1,8
Transport	6,0	5,3	10,2	12,1	6,5	8,2
Nursery	0,6	0,4	0,2	0,4	0,1	0,3
Sports and leisure	0,6	0,8	1,6	1,3	0,9	1,1
Culture	0,5	0,6	1,4	1,5	0,6	1,0
Deficiency	0,3	0,2	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,2
Digital inclusion	0,4	0,5	0,4	0,5	0,1	0,4
Promisaes /PEC G	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,1	0,0	0,1
Permanence Scholarship - Institution	7,8	5,6	9,0	8,4	7,7	7,6
MEC Permanence Scholarship	0,9	0,8	3,3	3,8	0,6	2,1

Source: 5th National Survey of Socioeconomic and Cultural Profile of IFES Graduates (2018) adapted by the authors

In comparison with aid related to other areas of action proposed by the PNAES, there is a disadvantage of digital inclusion in relation to the percentages of students reached in all regions. This demonstrates greater investments by the IFES in other areas that have been considered by the institutions as priorities.

Nowadays, digital inclusion and, from it, access to information by people, groups and society has become increasingly important and necessary. In this sense, Neves (2019, p. 19, our translation) states that:

> Access to information by civil society has been pointed out as one of the means that can contribute to the development of individuals' creative and intellectual potential. This access process, mediated by a computer and with the support of human mediation, has been discussed in the literature of several areas of Applied Social and Human Sciences. Such discussions generate studies that, in turn, have reported and/or supported governmental and non-governmental initiatives that intend to minimize the digital divide.

As indicated by the author, such discussions lead to the development of new initiatives. In the context of higher education and with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, the need for digital inclusion was unveiled. These actions have become essential in the composition of the resources provided to students for their stay at the university, and it is believed that they are as necessary and important as, for example, food and housing, enhancing the implementation of

the teaching and learning process and collaborating in order to avoid retention and evasion, as is objectified in the National Student Assistance Program.

In this way, digital inclusion is presented as one of the necessary devices for the viability of education processes. According to Marcon (2015, p. 23, our translation):

> [...] digital inclusion presupposes the empowerment of people through technologies, the guarantee of social equity and the appreciation of diversity, meeting individual and collective needs, aiming at transforming the very conditions of existence and exercising citizenship in the network.

The author mentions the understanding of digital inclusion as being something that goes beyond access to technological resources and that is configured in the effective use of technology for the transformation of people and their empowerment. Thus, it is believed that this action in the context of education, nowadays, makes it possible for students to experience, access and their participation in the set of activities proposed by the courses and in other academic demands that were restructured to meet the remote systems of teaching.

According to Saviani (2020, p. 06, emphasis added, our translation):

> This expression "remote teaching" has been used as an alternative to Distance Education, as Distance Education already has a regulated existence coexisting with face-to-face education as a distinct modality offered regularly. So, "remote teaching" is seen as a substitute for face-to-face teaching exceptionally during this period of the pandemic when face-to-face education is banned.

Being a transitory measure to replace the way of assisting students in the learning process, in order to be effective, it requires certain conditions to be guaranteed for its realization. To this end, Saviani (2020, p. 6, our translation) states that:

> a) access for all students to the virtual environment provided by the equipment represented by computers, cell phones and the like; b) considering that students and teachers must be confined to their homes, these must all be equipped with internet access; c) all students must meet the minimum requirements to successfully follow remote teaching. That is, everyone must be not only literate in the strict sense, but also in a functional sense and, more than that, not be digitally illiterate.

As the author warns, in addition to the material aspects related to the necessary equipment and connectivity, it is essential that students are able to play a leading role in learning by mastering the ways of using technological tools that enable access to knowledge.

In short, Neves (2019, p. 69), states that "The protagonist's characteristics are welcome in the educational process because they aim to improve school performance when employed

under behavioral lines and development theories". According to this author, it is expected that students, in the position of protagonists, see themselves as active subjects of the process and in front of the learning object, as protagonist subjects, they are the main actors of this action and responsible for certain states that stimulate learning.

In this way, it is thought that digital inclusion, due to its responsibility to enable the interaction and participation of students in this new daily life, in which technology and access to it have become fundamental for carrying out and participating in the process, becomes also be considered potential for social inclusion.

As a category of analysis, digital inclusion is understood to be a political object. In a political discourse materialized in programs, lines and strategies of action, projects and socio-digital centers, it is found in the scope of education, observed mainly as public policy, in which the main subject (context of the analyzes) has been the school (NEVES, 2019).

In this sense, Pischetola (2016) states that digital inclusion constitutes the social and political inclusion of citizens, and access to technology becomes an opportunity. As an opportunity, we can say that it also involves content production practices oriented to a culture in which young people are helped in building their social identities and in connecting the textbook with their concrete experiences in the world.

Thus, it is believed that digital inclusion is an opportunity, since it brings with it the material conditions for access to equipment, technologies and other means necessary for connectivity, but also because it allows the human conditions to the maintenance of social interactions and participation in the educational process, through the network and its various connectivity tools.

In this context and for the situations we experience in the pedagogical process today, Neves (2019) states that interactivity becomes essential in Education, as it aims to streamline pedagogical practices, considering the speed arising from the concept of hypertext and the versatility of hypermedia. The dynamism provided by interactivity in communicative contexts constitutes a rich network cooperative learning environment.

In this way, the processes of digital inclusion foster collective movements, as Marcon (2015, p. 51, our translation) explains:

> [...] Digital inclusion processes presuppose collective and decentralized movements, in which each subject is potentially a node that can infer, transform and give new perspectives to the flow of the network. In this scenario, interactivity, collective intelligence, diversity and the need to assume oneself as a protagonist subject and content producer enhances the

exercise of citizenship on the network and invalidates the model of reproduction and consumption.

The scenario pointed out by the author, in the context of higher education, provides students with the necessary interaction/action with colleagues, teachers and with the teaching institution and participation in the learning process, but beyond that it allows their empowerment, protagonism and their participation in social relations and a perspective of overcoming existing social, digital and educational inequalities. That is, understanding that the student develops, in addition to technical skills in the use of digital technology, social practices, relationships with their sociocultural context and critical and personal ways of thinking.

Final remarks

Based on the study carried out, it can be seen that the National Student Assistance Program (PNAES) represents an important advance in guaranteeing the permanence of students in public higher education and consolidates itself in the perspective of a right for students in social vulnerability. It can be seen that its implementation becomes a challenge, considering the complexity, which comes from significant changes in the service profile. These modifications, which significantly impact the field of AE, are directly related to the implementation of educational policies, such as: National High School Examination (ENEM), Unified Selection System (SISU) and Restructuring and Expansion of Federal Universities (REUNI).

For the effectiveness of the policy, with regard to guaranteeing the permanence of students, the relevance of actions aimed at digital inclusion is reaffirmed, in addition to the other areas provided for by the PNAES, and the need for allocation, by the IFES, of a greater volume of resources for its financing.

Faced with such significant changes in the social context, nowadays, it is evident that digital inclusion becomes essential in the scenario of higher education and in the composition of resources provided to students for their permanence at the university.

Specifically, it appears that digital inclusion has been made possible by the transfer of resources to access electronic equipment and internet data packages by the IFES. This action, associated with the other resources provided by the AE, seems to be relevant and help in keeping students in their courses. However, it is understood that, in order to effectively provide digital inclusion, the institutions' capacity for action must be expanded beyond the proposition of resources for access, above all, also providing actions that enable the empowerment of subjects in the use of technologies and expanding the its potential for use in the learning process.

Thus, developing actions to guarantee and permanence of students, within the scope of digital inclusion, seems to influence the reduction of social, educational and digital inequalities. It is noticed, however, that in order to guarantee the citizenship of these subjects, it is necessary that they have, in addition to access to technology and its digital resources, adequate conditions for the use of these technological tools for learning.

Students who use the policy have a condition of fragility in relation to their permanence in the institutions. Thus, based on the preliminary readings that were carried out, it is observed that the actions that were problematized, added to the other resources provided by Student Assistance, come to enable the access and permanence of these subjects in the university, the continuity of their graduation courses and the necessary role for its realization.

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