Quotas in Brazilian Public Universities

Effects on private and secondary schooling

Mary Arends-Kuenning
Questions

• Do quotas increase socioeconomic and racial diversity in Brazilian public universities?
• How do quota students compare to non-quota students?
• How will quotas impact the public secondary school system?
• How will the elite respond?
U.S. and Brazil educational attainment, age 25+

Source: World Bank, Achieving World Class Education in Brazil, p. 125.
Population between 15 and 25 who live with parents
Enrollment rates in tertiary education

* Taxa de escolarização líquida: Percentual da população em determinada faixa etária que se encontra matriculada no nível de ensino adequado à sua idade.

* Taxa de escolarização bruta: Comparação do total de matrículas em um dado nível de ensino com a população na faixa etária adequada a esse nível.
Current affirmative action in Brazil

- April 2012 Supreme Court decides racial quotas in universities are constitutional
- August 2012 Senate approves (80-1) Law of Social Quotas
- Half of slots in federal universities reserved for graduates of public schools
- Racial mix must reflect local population
- 25 percent must have family per capita income less than 150 percent of minimum wage
Early initiatives in affirmative action

- Universidade Federal da Bahia
- Universidade Estadual do Rio de Janeiro and Universidade Estadual do Norte Fluminense
- Universidade de Brasilia
- Unicamp
- In 2008, 38 out of 224 public schools
Research findings

• Quotas increased diversity. Proportion of preto and pardo students increased, as did students from poor backgrounds.
• Quota students had worse vestibular scores than non-quota students.
• Disparities were smaller looking at GPA and drop out. In some cases, quota students did better.
• Childs and Stromquist (2014)
Research findings, cont

- Quota students did relatively worse in competitive fields than in less competitive fields.
- Researchers conclude vestibular is not a completely accurate predictor of success.
- Ferman and Assuncao (2005) found evidence that favored groups had worse SAEB scores when UERJ and UENF had quotas.
- Francis and Tannuri-Pianto (2012) found quotas did not reduce effort for UnB applicants.
New affirmative action

• Much more extensive. Half of slots reserved for public school students
• General equilibrium vs. partial equilibrium. Law affects all federal universities, some states
• Ex. Unicamp previously added points to vestibular. Small effects on diversity (minority enrollment from 11.6% to 15.7%)
Quotas and the elite

- Open to poor in public school only
- Open to public school only
- Open to elite in private schools

Before quotas vs. After quotas
Strategies to follow for elite

• Best students won’t change strategy—still eligible for half of slots
• Next 25 percent consider going to public school.
• Depends on distributions of performance in public schools compared to private schools.
• More likely to go to public secondary if they want competitive fields
Possible outcomes

• Greater heterogeneity in public schools, with elite choosing high-quality

• Criticism with UFBA affirmative action—students from elite public schools like military academy got preference

• More competition at elite private schools, FGV, Insper, PUC-Rio

• Bifurcation at public universities
University enrollment, public and private
Conclusions

• Quotas don’t address access to largest growing segment of tertiary education—private universities (Prouni)
• Effects on quality of world-ranked Brazilian universities
• Pathway for people from disadvantaged racial and economic groups to enter upper middle class and elite