

DEVELOPMENT OF AN ACADEMIC JOURNEY IN DENTISTRY: EDUCATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF LEADERSHIP AND EMANCIPATION OF SUBJECTS



<https://doi.org/10.56238/sevened2024.034-006>

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ABSTRACT

This chapter analyzes how academic organization contributes to the formation of leaders in dentistry, highlighting the role of academic leagues, academic journeys and national curriculum guidelines. The leagues act as spaces for practical learning, developing interpersonal, management and leadership skills. The conferences, in turn, connect theory and practice, promoting a culture of research, networking and interdisciplinarity. The curriculum guidelines encourage student protagonism through active methodologies, such as problem-based learning, which stimulate autonomy and critical reflection. In addition, the need for institutional support to expand the impact of these initiatives is highlighted, ensuring innovation and ethics in professional training. The study concludes that the combination of innovative pedagogical practices and extracurricular activities is essential to train leaders prepared to face social and professional challenges and transform the oral health scenario.

Keywords: Organization. Leadership. Higher Education.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to explore and critically analyze the fundamental elements that make up academic training in the field of dentistry. The focus is on the importance of academic organization in the construction of robust knowledge and in the formation of individuals capable of exercising leadership in their areas of expertise. The constitution of educational leadership represents not only a personal improvement, but also a significant contribution to society in general (FONSECA, 2013; HESBOL, 2017).

Academic organization, in its multiple forms, proves to be essential throughout the educational process. The role of academic centers, student organizations, and especially academic leagues, deserve special attention because they foster an environment that fosters the development of leadership skills and a sense of social responsibility among dental students. In this sense, the federal constitution provides foundations that guarantee the organization of such entities, corroborating their importance and legality in the Brazilian educational scenario (CAVALCANTE et al., 2018; MEC, DCNS OF DENTISTRY).

Additionally, this work narrates how leaders are trained and encouraged within the national curriculum guidelines in dentistry. The pedagogical practices adopted in higher education institutions in dentistry aim, among other objectives, at the formation of leaders capable of promoting positive changes both in the field of health and in the broader social context. The training of these leaders should be guided by the emancipation of students, allowing them to develop critical thinking and an ethical posture in the face of the challenges imposed by the profession (FRANCISCO et al., 2016; NUNES AND MOTA, 2015).

The chapter also sets out to explore the history of academic leagues, highlighting their evolution and impact on the dental education landscape. Such leagues have established themselves as important instruments in the extracurricular training of students, promoting an integration between theory and practice, in addition to encouraging research and university extension.

The didactic character of the text seeks not only to inform, but also to stimulate reflection on the paths and challenges in the academic training of future dental professionals.

METHODOLOGY

To explore educational considerations in the construction of leadership and emancipation of subjects in the context of academic journeys in dentistry, this chapter will follow the literature review method, focusing on the analysis of materials that address the

importance of academic journeys and other educational practices in the formation of students' leadership and autonomy competencies (MELO et al., 2019; TATIANA et al., 2023).

Selection of sources: The review will be conducted based on a search in academic databases, such as Scielo, PubMed, Google Scholar, and VHL, prioritizing publications between 2000 and 2024. Scientific articles, books, theses, dissertations and official documents that discuss academic journeys, leadership training, critical pedagogy and emancipation of students in higher education, with emphasis on the dental area, will be included.

Inclusion criteria: Materials will be selected that specifically address the role of academic journeys, academic leagues, and other extracurricular activities in the formation of student leadership and the promotion of the autonomy of individuals. Studies that deal with the national curriculum guidelines in dentistry and pedagogical approaches that promote the emancipation of students will be especially considered.

Exclusion Criteria: Publications that deal with academic training without a direct relationship to dentistry or to building leadership and emancipation will be excluded. Studies whose approach is limited to technical education or that do not discuss the relationship between academic journeys and the development of leadership competencies will also be disregarded.

Data analysis: The selected texts were subjected to a critical reading, focusing on identifying how academic journeys and other educational initiatives collaborate for the construction of leadership, intellectual emancipation and student engagement. Aspects such as the impact of these activities on academic performance, student motivation and the development of non-technical skills, fundamental for the exercise of leadership, will be analyzed.

Synthesis and discussion: Based on the analysis of the data, a synthesis was elaborated that will connect the theoretical and practical elements identified in the literature, aiming to discuss how the academic journeys can act as training platforms, capable of promoting student protagonism, critical reflection and the emancipation of future dental professionals. The discussion in this chapter will also address the challenges and opportunities in creating academic environments that encourage the development of leaders committed to transformative and ethical practices.

This methodological approach will allow a deeper understanding of how academic journeys in dentistry can be powerful instruments in the formation of leaders and in the

emancipation of students, connecting technical education to the formation of critical and socially aware subjects.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

ACADEMIC ORGANIZATION AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR THE FORMATION OF INDIVIDUALS

The academic organization plays an extremely important role in the training of individuals, especially in the context of higher education in complex areas of vast socioeconomic responsibility, such as dentistry. It goes beyond a simple administrative structure, shaping the academic trajectory of students and encompassing everything from pedagogical guidelines to the emotional and intellectual support necessary to face the challenges of the educational process (RODRIGUES, 2001).

A well-structured academic organization ensures that dental students receive a quality education that is not only limited to the technical domain, but also promotes the development of essential competencies such as critical thinking, interpersonal skills, professional ethics, and, above all, the ability to lead. These are elements that are increasingly in demand in a globalized and constantly changing world, where professionals not only perform their functions, but also become agents of change in their environment (FERREIRA; FERREIRA; FREIRE, 2013).

Academic centers emerge as crucial components of this organizational structure, decisively influencing student life. They are democratic spaces that foster student participation, critical thinking, and the ability to organize and lead. The creation and maintenance of these spaces are legally supported by the Federal Constitution of Brazil, which ensures the right to free association, including the formation of autonomous student entities. These centers act as mediators between students and educational institutions, ensuring that students' voices are heard and their needs are properly met (FRANCISCO et al., 2016).

In the academic environment, the creation and operation of academic leagues also play a fundamental role, providing a complementary space to formal education. These leagues are student organizations that focus on specific areas of knowledge, allowing members to delve into topics of interest to them with a practical and often innovative focus (SILVA; FLORES, 2015).

The importance of academic leagues transcends the simple theoretical deepening, configuring themselves as a space for the development of leadership. The students involved in these activities are often responsible for organizing events, leading research

and articulating extension actions, which requires a practical and efficient involvement of leadership and teamwork skills. This experience is invaluable, preparing them for future leadership positions in their professional careers (HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2011).

One cannot fail to mention the role of the teaching and administrative corporations of educational institutions that, by articulating their educational policies, allow the flourishing of these entities and student experiences. The interrelationship between the organizational structure of the institution and the initiatives of the students creates an environment conducive to collaborative learning and innovation in teaching (RONCAGLIO, 2004).

It is worth mentioning that for this academic organization to achieve its training objectives effectively, it is essential that institutions adopt a proactive and encouraging stance towards these student entities. This implies not only logistical support, but also pedagogical and strategic support, which ensures the necessary curricular flexibility and the inclusion of innovative teaching and learning practices (GOERGEN; HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2021).

In short, the academic organization, when well oriented, becomes a powerful tool in the process of integral education of the dentistry student. It creates an educational setting where it is possible to develop both the technical knowledge and the social and emotional skills indispensable for leadership in the twenty-first century. Thus, a solid foundation is established so that, when leaving the university, graduates are not only prepared to act professionally, but also motivated to contribute in a meaningful and responsible way to society (CANDATTEN et al., 2023).

CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENCES AND ACADEMIC CENTERS

Brazilian legislation, through the Federal Constitution of 1988, establishes numerous guarantees that promote quality education and student organization. When referring to education, the Constitution highlights the importance of education as the foundation for national development, in addition to ensuring freedom of education, which is intrinsically linked to the right of students to organize themselves in entities such as academic centers, student unions and academic leagues (FRANCISCO et al., 2016).

Article 5 of the Federal Constitution, which deals with individual and collective rights and duties, expressly guarantees freedom of association for lawful purposes, which is prohibited for paramilitary purposes (Article 5, XVII). Also in the same article, it is guaranteed that "no one shall be obliged to associate or remain associated" (Art. 5, XX), ensuring the autonomy of both individuals and associations that wish to form or participate. This is of paramount importance for academic centers, which are based on the freedom of

organization of students as a way of promoting their academic, cultural and social interests (ALHEIT; DAUSIEN, 2006).

Academic centers are, therefore, crucial agents in the educational context, playing a role that goes beyond the simple mediation of conflicts between students and institutions. Their performance is extremely relevant in the dynamization of the university environment, providing students with a platform for the exercise of their citizenship and protagonism, which prepares them for a future of active participation in civil society (RONCAGLIO, 2004).

Still in the constitutional field, Article 206 establishes that education will be provided based on principles such as the freedom to learn, teach, research and disseminate thought, art and knowledge (Art. 206, II), in addition to the pluralism of ideas and pedagogical conceptions (Art. 206, III). Such guidelines are the legal basis for the existence of organizations that promote debates and innovative educational practices, a common characteristic of academic centers (FERREIRA; FERREIRA; FREIRE, 2013).

In practice, these entities contribute significantly to the academic development of students, offering a wide range of activities that can include everything from policy debates, study sessions and training in specific skills, to the very demand for improvements in the academic curriculum. This environment creates advantageous conditions for the flourishing of natural leaderships and for the construction of a critical and socially engaged consciousness among students (BROCKVELD; VENÂNCIO, 2020).

In addition, academic centers work to ensure that the rights of students, as a student body, are respected. They advocate for better teaching conditions, defense of democratic principles and for a welcoming and respectful university environment. In this sense, the Constitution and its guarantees serve as a formal support for the performance of these organizations, enabling them to fully exercise their role of representing and defending student interests (DE LIMA FIGUEREDO et al., 2016).

With regard to dentistry, specifically, the performance of academic centers is equally vital. The challenges and specific nuances of dental education require organizational support that ranges from the discussion of curricular content to the implementation of complementary activities, such as courses, lectures and workshops. These complement technical training with practical and current aspects of the profession, providing students with the possibility of a more complete and integrated training (FONSECA, 2013).

Still, it is important to underline the collaborative role that academic centers can play in working hand in hand with university administrations and teaching departments. By fostering an open and ongoing dialogue between the parties, they not only ensure that student demands are heard and met, but also foster an environment of collaboration and

innovation. This synergy is essential to ensure an education that is dynamic and responds effectively to the contemporary challenges faced by future dentists (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

In summary, academic centers, supported by constitutional references, are configured as catalyzing agents of transformation within higher education institutions. Through their effective performance, they not only ensure that the teaching and learning process is enriching, but also that students develop a critical awareness and are prepared to exercise leadership in their future fields of professional activity (SANTOS et al., 2020).

LEADERSHIP AND NATIONAL CURRICULUM GUIDELINES IN DENTISTRY

The training of leaders in the context of higher education in dentistry is a theme of extreme relevance, deeply interconnected with the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) that guide dentistry courses in Brazil. Such guidelines aim not only at the technical training of future oral health professionals, but also at the training of individuals able to face social and professional challenges, promoting positive changes in the scope of their actions (FONSECA, 2013).

The National Curriculum Guidelines (DCNs) for undergraduate courses in dentistry establish a series of competencies and skills that must be developed throughout the course, with the objective of training a "dental surgeon, generalist, humanist, critical and reflective". These competencies include the ability to act in an articulated manner with other health areas, and to understand the relationship of dental professionals with public and private health management. Such competencies establish a fertile ground for the development of leaders, since they imply the need to develop interpersonal, management and communication skills (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

One of the fundamental elements for leadership development is the encouragement of student protagonism, encouraged by the guidelines through teaching methodologies that favor student autonomy, such as problem-based learning (PBL) and the use of active methodologies. These pedagogical approaches encourage students to be the main agents of their learning, developing problem-solving and decision-making skills - essential skills for any leader (FRANCISCO et al., 2016).

In addition, the DCNs emphasize the importance of an integrated education, which considers social, human and environmental issues, providing the student with a holistic view of the profession. By understanding the context in which they work, future dentists are prepared to lead initiatives that go beyond the field of oral health, encompassing health promotion practices and community well-being. This integrated approach is essential for the

formation of visionary leaders, who understand their professional performance as part of a broader system of collective health and well-being (BROCKVELD; VENÂNCIO, 2020).

In the academic environment, the development of these leadership competencies is often promoted in a practical way through extension programs, extracurricular activities, and participation in academic leagues and academic centers. Student leaders emerge as protagonists of these initiatives, occupying roles of coordination and project management, which gives them practical experience in leadership and team management (SILVA; FLORES, 2015).

In addition to formal curricular practices, the academic environment plays a crucial role in stimulating the formation of leaders through a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship. Such educational initiatives are aligned with the need to train professionals capable of innovating, undertaking and leading in an increasingly competitive and dynamic labor market. The DCNs for Dentistry, therefore, incorporate this need by encouraging a critical and reflective education that encourages the student to be proactive and innovative (NUNES; MOTA, 2015).

A prominent aspect of the DCNs is also the encouragement of interprofessional practice, which teaches students to work collaboratively with other health professionals. This not only improves patient service, but also prepares the student to assume leadership positions in interdisciplinary teams, through the development of communication and leadership skills (SARAIVA et al., 2018).

Finally, it is important to emphasize that leadership in dentistry, guided by the curriculum guidelines, is not only about the ability to stand out individually. Rather, it refers to the ability to motivate, engage, and direct teams to achieve common goals; it is about being a facilitator of processes of change and continuous improvement, both within the offices and in the community (FONSECA, 2013).

Thus, the National Curriculum Guidelines for dentistry courses in Brazil foster the training of leaders through a multidimensional approach, which integrates technical knowledge with critical awareness, ethics and the capacity for innovation. This competency framework reflects the vision of a higher education committed not only to the training of competent professionals, but also to the development of agents of change, who can effectively navigate the challenges and opportunities of the twenty-first century and contribute significantly to the improvement of health as a whole (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

THE EMANCIPATION OF STUDENTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PEDAGOGY OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The emancipation of students in the context of higher education, particularly in the area of dentistry, is crucial for the training of professionals capable of acting effectively in a complex and constantly evolving world. From the perspective of higher education pedagogy, emancipation does not refer only to the achievement of autonomy in the learning process, but also to the ability to critically apply the knowledge acquired in clinical and social practice (CANDATTEN et al., 2023).

The pedagogy of emancipation, as outlined by thinkers such as Paulo Freire, argues that education should be an act of freedom, promoting an environment where students not only absorb information, but question, analyze, and transform realities. In the context of dental education, this means preparing students to act not only as health professionals, but also as influencers and leaders aware of their social and ethical role (CANDATTEN et al., 2023).

A fundamental aspect of this pedagogy is the promotion of student-centered teaching, where the student is seen as an active subject in his or her learning trajectory. Pedagogical practices should therefore encourage intellectual curiosity, critical questioning, and problem-solving. This approach promotes self-confidence and the preparation of the individual to face the challenges of the professional environment, stimulating learning that goes beyond technicality (RONCAGLIO, 2004).

In the course of dentistry, emancipation can also be seen in the students' ability to understand oral health in a broader context of public health. Emancipatory training seeks for the future dentist to understand the patient not only as a biological being, but as a social being, inserted in a universe of complex social, cultural and economic relations (BROCKVELD; VENÂNCIO, 2020).

Emancipatory educational practices are also reflected in the appreciation of practical experience combined with a critical reflection on practice. Through internships, outreach programs, and community activities, students are exposed to realities that often transcend the controlled environment of classrooms and laboratories. This drives the development of critical thinking, which is essential for responsible decision-making in the exercise of the profession (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

In addition to the individual aspect, the pedagogy of emancipation is also directed to the collective, promoting teamwork and empathy. Through collaborative activities, students are encouraged to understand the importance of dialogue and cooperation in solving complex problems. This learning not only favors the development of interpersonal skills,

which are fundamental for clinical practice, but also fosters an environment where knowledge is built in a shared way (CANDATTEN et al., 2023).

However, implementing an emancipatory pedagogy requires an institutional commitment to the training of educators prepared for this type of teaching. This implies the continuous training of teachers, who need to be able to mediate learning in a reflective way, articulating theory and practice, and stimulating debates that challenge the status quo (CONTRIBUTIONS OF PAULO FREIRE., 2024).

Another relevant aspect is the inclusion of active teaching methodologies that promote student autonomy, such as the flipped classroom, project-based learning, and the use of educational technologies that facilitate access to information and encourage active student participation (VALENTE; BURD, 2019).

The practice of emancipation in dentistry must also encompass ethical awareness and social responsibility, elements that are imperative for the current practice of dentistry. The focus should not be only on how to perform technical procedures, but also on how to use the knowledge acquired to promote collective well-being, respecting the individual and cultural differences of patients (BROCKVELD; VENÂNCIO, 2020).

In conclusion, the emancipation of students in dentistry, guided by the pedagogy of higher education, aims not only at the formation of technically competent professionals, but also ethical citizens who are aware of their role as agents of change in society. This educational approach encourages the formation of a non-conformist professional, who seeks to question and improve the environment in which he or she works, promoting health in a critical and innovative way. By awakening the critical and autonomous potential of students, higher education ensures that future dental professionals are also promoters of health and social justice, able to deal with the challenges of the twenty-first century (CANDATTEN et al., 2023).

THE HISTORY OF ACADEMIC LEAGUES

Academic leagues play a strategic role in the complementary training of undergraduate students, especially in health courses, such as dentistry. These student organizations have their origins in the desire to deepen knowledge and practice in specific areas, through an arrangement organized and continued by students interested in expanding their academic experience beyond traditional curricula (CAVALCANTE et al., 2018).

Historically, academic leagues emerged as a response to the need for integration between theory and practice experienced in higher education courses. From the twentieth

century, in the Brazilian context, these entities began to be formally structured within universities, initially in medical courses, and later expanding to other areas of health, including dentistry. They were established as extension groups that sought to fill gaps in traditional academic training, offering a space for the exchange of knowledge and experiences between students and more experienced professionals (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

Since their inception, academic leagues have established themselves as a vital means of practical application of the knowledge acquired in the classroom. They allowed students, under the guidance of professors and professionals in the field, to carry out activities ranging from the organization of scientific events, case studies and research to the provision of community services. This continuous interaction with real practices is essential for the consolidation of learning and for the formation of a more confident and competent professional (SANTOS et al., 2020).

In the field of dentistry, academic leagues stand out for emphasizing subspecialties that often do not receive enough attention in traditional curricula, such as stomatology, oral and maxillofacial surgery, pediatric dentistry, periodontics, among others. This provides students with the opportunity to delve deeper into their areas of interest, acquiring practical and theoretical experience that is indispensable for future professional practice (CAVALCANTE et al., 2021).

Fundamental to the success of academic leagues is their multidisciplinary character and the ability to bring together different actors in the process of training students. The interaction between students from different semesters, professors, alumni and professionals in the market strengthens the education network and creates an environment conducive to the emergence of new ideas and techniques. This blended approach also extends to interaction with other areas of knowledge, promoting a comprehensive understanding of health and favoring interdisciplinary partnerships that are increasingly necessary in addressing contemporary health challenges (GOERGEN; HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2021).

Another striking feature of the leagues is their role in promoting community education. The leagues are often involved in extension actions that bring knowledge and health care to needy communities, fulfilling an important social role and aligning with the university's principles of social responsibility. These activities not only benefit the population served, but also provide students with a real sense of health inequalities, while expanding their clinical and communication skills (PEREIRA et al., 2024).

The impact of academic leagues can also be seen in the formation of support and collaboration networks between students and professionals, which often endure after

graduation. The development of a network of contacts allows, in addition to better learning opportunities, a more qualified entry into the labor market (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

In addition, academic leagues foster the spirit of leadership and responsibility among their members. Participating in a league requires students to have organizational skills and commitment that promote the development of management and leadership skills. By organizing events, coordinating discussions and managing the league's activities, students develop managerial skills that will be valuable in their future professionals (HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2011).

Despite their positive impact, academic leagues also face challenges, such as the need for adequate resources for their activities and the search for a balance between league activities and the traditional academic load. In order for its formative potential to be fully realized, it is necessary to have the institutional support and understanding of universities and colleges as to its complementary role in academic education (CAVALCANTE et al., 2018).

In short, the history of academic leagues in dentistry reflects a trajectory of evolution and adaptation to the new demands of the market and society. They offer students a robust platform to develop essential professional and social skills. By integrating theory and practice, by fostering social responsibility, and by stimulating leadership and innovation, academic leagues present themselves as an indispensable part of dental education, preparing students not only to be technically competent professionals, but also to be active citizens engaged in the debate on health and social practices (SILVA; FLORES, 2015).

IMPORTANCE OF ACADEMIC JOURNEYS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Academic journeys represent a vital part of the educational experience at the higher level, especially in courses that require integration between theory and practice, such as dentistry. These journeys are educational events that provide a wide range of activities and opportunities for students, encouraging the deepening of knowledge, fostering professional connections, and stimulating active academic involvement (TATIANA et al., 2023).

The holding of academic days is a unique moment in which several educational initiatives converge, such as lectures, seminars, workshops and research presentations. These events allow students, faculty, and professionals in the field of dentistry to come together to share knowledge and experiences, which favors a collaborative learning environment. This multilateral interaction is fundamental for the enrichment of higher education, offering participants the opportunity to update themselves with advances in science and new trends in dental practice (DE LIMA FIGUEREDO et al., 2016).

One of the main benefits of academic journeys is the integration between the theoretical content learned in the classroom and contemporary and innovative market practices. By participating in the various events proposed, students have the opportunity to observe, in practice, how theoretical concepts are applied in the professional context. These events often feature real-world case studies, new techniques, and debates on professional ethics, allowing students to move their studies beyond the academic environment and progressively enter professional life (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

In addition, academic journeys expand the horizon of learning by including interdisciplinary perspectives that are essential for holistic professional practice. In dentistry, this is especially relevant when considering the intersections with other areas of health such as medicine, nursing, psychology, and related areas such as biomaterials and technology. Interaction with these disciplines during the conferences promotes a more integral understanding of health issues, preparing students to work in interprofessional teams, a growing trend in health systems around the world (BROCKVELD; VENÂNCIO, 2020).

Another important aspect of academic journeys is their ability to foster professional networking. By bringing together a diverse range of participants, including students from different stages, experienced professionals, researchers and representatives of public and private institutions, the conferences provide a valuable space for the construction of contact networks that can be decisive in the professional future of students. Internship opportunities, research collaboration, participation in study groups, and even job offers can arise from the interactions carried out during these events (FERREIRA; FERREIRA; FREIRE, 2013).

Academic journeys also develop a culture of research among students. The presentation of academic papers, whether they are the result of individual studies, research groups or academic leagues, is often a central activity in events. This practice not only encourages research and innovation, but also develops essential skills in communication, scientific writing, and critical argumentation among participants. By receiving feedback from experts in the field, students can improve their projects and gain confidence in their capabilities as researchers (PEREIRA et al., 2024).

Another significant impact of academic journeys is on student motivation. The exchange of experiences, the recognition of academic efforts and the possibility of practical learning are factors that often increase students' interest in their area of study. Successful events have the potential to inspire and motivate students to engage more deeply with their academic and professional trajectory, as well as to actively participate in the construction of their own learning process (TATIANA et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, academic journeys present their challenges. Organizing these events requires effective coordination, which involves planning, communication, and resource management. Despite this, the interaction with these experiences can be formative for the student organizers, as it provides them with practical experience in leadership and project management (SANTOS et al., 2020).

In summary, academic journeys are an indispensable component in higher education, with profound impacts on the professional and personal training of dental students. They act as a catalyst that enhances learning, brings academic and professional reality closer together, and inspires innovation and scientific investigation. By enabling a dynamic and participatory educational environment, academic journeys not only enrich the traditional curriculum, but also instill in students a continuous desire for learning and the search for professional excellence in their future careers (TATIANA et al., 2023).

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TRAINING OF LEADERS IN DENTISTRY

Educating leaders in dentistry is a complex process, which involves the development of a set of technical, interpersonal, and management skills. The challenges faced in this field are significant, but the opportunities that present themselves for students and recent graduates are equally promising, especially in a world where effective leadership has become an essential differential for professional success and for the continuous improvement of health systems (NUNES; MOTA, 2015).

One of the main challenges in training leaders in dentistry is the integration of non-technical competencies into the traditional curriculum of dental schools. Often, the predominant focus is on technical excellence and mastery of clinical practices, neglecting the development of crucial skills such as communication, teamwork, decision-making, and conflict management. It is imperative that educational institutions adopt pedagogical approaches capable of fostering these skills, preparing students to assume leadership roles in increasingly interdisciplinary and dynamic environments (BROCKVELD; VENÂNCIO, 2020).

In addition, the training of leaders in dentistry faces the challenge of dealing with rapid technological and scientific innovations. Dentistry, like many fields of healthcare, is constantly evolving with the advent of new technologies, innovative materials, and clinical advancements. Leaders in dentistry need to not only keep up with these changes, but also position themselves ahead of them, promoting evidence-based practices and incorporating innovations in a critical and responsible manner (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

Diversity is another relevant challenge. Although there is a growing recognition of the importance of diversity in health teams, there is still an underrepresentation of certain groups in leadership positions in dentistry. Promoting inclusion and ensuring that the training of leaders reflects the diversity of the population they serve is a challenge that requires clear institutional policies and a commitment to eliminate structural barriers that limit access and professional advancement for individuals from underrepresented groups (FERREIRA; FERREIRA; FREIRE, 2013).

On the other hand, opportunities in the training of leaders in dentistry are abundant and varied. The growing demand for oral health services, both in urban and rural contexts, makes room for the emergence of leaders who can mobilize resources, implement new practices, and create innovative solutions to serve diverse and growing populations. The intersection of dentistry with other health areas also creates opportunities for the development of interprofessional leaders who can react quickly and effectively to the complex needs of health care (SARAIVA et al., 2018).

Continuing education and specialization programs become fertile fields for developing leaders, providing platforms for deepening knowledge and cultivating leadership competencies under the supervision of experienced mentors. In addition, participation in international conferences, workshops, and membership in professional associations can expand the horizon of students and professionals, introducing them to new perspectives and globally recognized practices (HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2011).

Educational technology also presents itself as a significant opportunity. The use of advanced simulation techniques, online learning, and augmented reality in dental curricula can create a more dynamic and interactive learning environment that prepares students for practice in complex, real-world situations. These educational tools will offer not only the necessary technical mastery, but also the ability to lead in highly technical and technologically driven environments (VALENTE; BURD, 2019).

Digital transformation in healthcare is a rich opportunity that must be explored, requiring leaders who are digitally proficient and able to implement digital health solutions in an innovative and effective way. These advances also open up opportunities for developing solutions that address health inequities, a space where leaders can create meaningful impacts by implementing programs and technologies that make oral health care more accessible and equitable (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

In conclusion, although the path to training leaders in dentistry is punctuated by several challenges, the opportunities are vast and extended in several directions. By aligning innovative pedagogical strategies committed to the comprehensive education of

students, it is possible not only to overcome existing challenges, but also to prepare dental leaders prepared to transform the oral health scenario and contribute unequivocally to a more efficient and inclusive health system (NUNES; MOTA, 2015).

THE INFLUENCE OF ACADEMIC LEAGUES ON MOTIVATION AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

Academic leagues have emerged as a fundamental component in the training of dental students, playing a significant role not only in complementing theoretical learning, but also directly influencing students' motivation and academic performance. By creating an environment that integrates practical experiences and theoretical knowledge, leagues offer a rich platform for the development of skills that go beyond those acquired in the classroom (PEREIRA et al., 2024).

Participation in academic leagues has a clear positive impact on student motivation. Engaging in extracurricular activities that resonate with your personal and professional interests generates an increase in interest in the subjects and topics studied. This can largely be attributed to the self-directed nature of the leagues' activities, which allow students to explore areas of expertise within dentistry, such as orthodontics, periodontics, or implant dentistry, encouraging learning that is both personally and professionally rewarding (CAVALCANTE et al., 2018).

Additionally, academic leagues foster a sense of community and belonging among students, which is vital for overall motivation and satisfaction during college life. Students involved in leagues have the opportunity to work closely with their peers, professors, and professionals in the field. This not only strengthens their teamwork skills but also creates support networks that help sustain their academic and professional endeavors (GOERGEN; HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2021).

As far as academic performance is concerned, academic leagues serve as platforms for implementing active learning, where students are encouraged to apply theoretical concepts in practical situations. Not only does this solidify existing knowledge, but it also helps to develop new skills and understandings, which is reflected in improved academic performance. Activities such as solving clinical cases, organizing lectures and workshops, as well as participating in science fairs, encourage the acquisition of knowledge in an applied and integrated way. Students who participate in leagues often perform better in theory and practice, due to the depth and innovation that these activities promote (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019).

Regular practice in a non-competitive but high-performance environment, such as that provided by academic leagues, also helps mitigate anxiety related to academic performance. Students have the chance to face challenges in an atmosphere of support and instruction, which allows them to make mistakes and learn from them without the immediate consequences of formal assessments. This approach reduces the pressure associated with error and promotes a space for growth based on constant learning and continuous improvement (HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2011).

Another determining point is the development of transversal skills that are associated with active participation in academic leagues. Project management, interpersonal communication, teaching, and leadership are critical skills that are developed naturally in an academic league environment. Such skills are widely recognized as fundamental for academic and professional success in dentistry, contributing significantly to student performance both in the university environment and in clinical practice (SILVA; FLORES, 2015).

In addition, the leagues' hands-on, collaborative approach fosters a type of learning that is continuous and adaptive. Students involved in research and extension projects, for example, introduce real-world variables into their academic training, making them more adaptable and prepared for the challenges of the professional scenario. This, in turn, can translate into greater success and professional satisfaction after graduation (PEREIRA et al., 2024).

Academic leagues also assist in career decision-making. By having the chance to explore different fields within dentistry, students can make more informed choices about their future specializations, avoiding wasting resources and efforts in directions that may not be aligned with their interests or aptitudes (CAVALCANTE et al., 2021).

In conclusion, academic leagues represent a potent force in dental education, positively impacting students' motivation and academic performance. They offer an environment that links theoretical and practical learning, encouraging active participation and increased student engagement. By enabling students to become more participative in their learning and develop critical skills, academic leagues become not only a complement to formal education, but a necessity for those seeking academic excellence and success in a career in dentistry (GOERGEN; HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis showed that the academic organization plays an essential role in the formation of leaders in dentistry. Academic centers and academic leagues not only offer

structural support, but also promote interpersonal and ethical competencies. By engaging students in pedagogical and extracurricular practices, these entities contribute to the construction of critical skills and proactive leadership. This approach is based on the national curriculum guidelines, which aim to train dental surgeons with a holistic view and multidisciplinary skills (FONSECA, 2013; BROCKVELD; VENÂNCIO, 2020).

The academic leagues, with their practical and extension actions, stand out for complementing formal education. The motivation provided by these leagues is directly linked to the opportunity for practical application of theoretical knowledge. Students report significant improvements in academic performance when participating in these activities, developing essential skills such as project management and interpersonal communication (MELO; BERRY; SOUZA, 2019; PEREIRA et al., 2024).

Academic journeys also play a vital role in bridging theory and practice. These events create opportunities for students to explore different interdisciplinary perspectives, preparing them for collaborative and innovative practices in the professional marketplace. In addition, the conferences promote a culture of research and networking, contributing to a more complete and integrated training (TATIANA et al., 2023; DE LIMA FIGUEREDO et al., 2016).

Another relevant point is the role of national curriculum guidelines in encouraging student autonomy and leadership. Active methodologies, such as problem-based learning, promote student protagonism, essential for decision-making and leadership in challenging contexts. Such practices have been widely recognized for their contributions to the development of transformative leadership (FRANCISCO et al., 2016; BRAVE; BURD, 2019).

Finally, the relationship between the academic organization and the training of leaders highlights the need for continuous institutional support. This support can include incentives for the creation of leagues and academic journeys, as well as curricular flexibility for extracurricular activities. Thus, educational institutions can enhance the comprehensive education of their students, promoting innovation, ethics and leadership in the dental field (HAMAMOTO FILHO, 2011; CAVALCANTE et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

Academic organization, through leagues and academic journeys, constitutes an essential basis for the formation of leadership in dentistry. The integration between theory and practice, combined with institutional support and the encouragement of active methodologies, promotes an environment conducive to the development of critical, ethical



and professional skills. Thus, it is essential that higher education institutions invest in structures that encourage student participation in extracurricular activities, ensuring the training of professionals capable of leading and innovating in the dental field.

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