

Perception of graduates about the quality of the night course in dentistry at a public institution in northeastern Brazil

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ABSTRACT

This was a documentary research, using data from the student questionnaire of ENADE 2016. We analyzed the answers given by students who completed a public higher education course in Dentistry at a public institution in a Capital city in Northeastern Brazil. The IES data were filtered from the ENADE 2016 microdata worksheet, using the IES code, as obtained from the electronic system of the MEC (eMEC). The sociodemographic variables were used to characterize the profile of the graduates of the night course. The answers to the questionnaire were grouped into categories of positive, neutral or negative responses, for the three sections of the questionnaire: didactic-pedagogical organization, infrastructure and physical facilities of the course, and expansion of academic and professional development. The latter was analyzed comparatively between the night course(?) and full-time students of the same IEH, by using the Chi-square tests and Fisher's exact test applied with 95% confidence. The sociodemographic profile included a group of single, white, males, with a mean age of 28.9 years. In the Quality assessment of the didactic-pedagogical organization, physical infrastructure and facilities of the course, students' perceptions were positive for the majority of the subcomponents of the questionnaire. There was statistically significant difference between the night and full-time course students' responses, in terms of opportunities for extension and exchanges and / or international internship. The perception of the graduates, presented positive results, conferring a criterion of quality. The study indicated that the policy of expansion of higher education to include the night classes remained fragmented as extracurricular activities in the development of these (night) students at the public university.

Descriptors: Education, Dental. Education, Higher. Educational Measurement.

INTRODUCTION

The introduction of night courses at the level of higher education in Brazil came about as a result of conquests achieved by popular pressure that demanded the right to education in the 1960s. However, it was only in 1996, when Law No. 394 – the Law of Directives and Bases for National Education – regulated the offer of these courses in public higher education institutions (IES), that allowed access [to these courses] by working students¹.

The increase in the number of places offered in the night classes at private IES allowed the less wealthy social classes to gain access to higher education. These IES are responsible for accommodating the majority of students, who, even when they work for up to 40 hours a week, find it possible to continue their studies in the night courses². In this scenario, the Ministry of Education, by means of Decree No. 6,096, of April 24, 2007, instituted the Program to Support the Plans for Restructuring and Expanding the Federal Universities (REUNI). This program aims to invest in federal IES from a broader perspective, allowing for the increase in admission vacancies and the offer of quality teaching, research and extension for everyone. The main objectives are to reduce social inequalities and promote the inclusion of the less favored population^{3,4}. However, there is still a long way to go to meet the requirements of these students with regard to social equality, while respecting their pedagogical specificities and enabling them to make better use of administrative, research and extension services.

The National Student Performance Examination (Enade), which is part of the National Higher Education Assessment System (Sinaes), assesses the learning process and student performance in relation to the syllabus provided for in the curricular guidelines of the course. The data from the student questionnaire have made it possible to analyze the socioeconomic and cultural

profile of the students, perception of teaching-learning, organization of the course, curriculum, and the teaching activity^{6,7}.

Given this new scenario of academic training in public IES in Brazil, it is important to analyze the impacts of the expansion process on the quality of courses and the training of these new professionals. In this research, the perception of the quality of full-time and evening courses in Dentistry at a public IES headquartered in a capital in the Northeast of Brazil was evaluated, by using data from the student questionnaire at Enade 2016, with the purpose of contributing to debates related to the expansion of night college courses, and to the impacts of this context on the progress of professional development in Dentistry.

2 METHODOLOGY

This was a documentary study, in which the Enade 2016 database was used, of which the microdata spreadsheet was obtained from the website of the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP). From the microdata, the answers given by the 126 graduates of the Dentistry course were extracted from both day and night classes of a public IES with its headquarters in a capital in the northeast of Brazil.

The Enade Student Questionnaire has 68 questions. The first segment deals with the socio-economic and cultural profile of the student, and consists of 26 multiple-choice questions, arranged in alphabetical order.

The second segment contains 42 questions divided into three components (didactic-pedagogical organization, infrastructure/physical facilities and opportunity to expand academic-professional development. For each assertion, the degree of agreement must be indicated on a scale ranging from 1 (complete disagreement) to 6 (complete agreement). If the individual thinks he/she does not have elements to assess the

question or consider it not relevant to his/her course, there are the options 'I don't know how to answer' and 'not applicable', respectively.

For the study, 10 questions were selected from the first segment (1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 10, 15, 17, 18, 23), which were reorganized into groups. In the questions regarding the didactic-pedagogical organization (27 to 40, 42, 47 to 50, 51, 55, 57 and 66), infrastructure and physical facilities (41, 54, 56, 58, 59 to 65 and 68) and opportunity for expansion of academic and professional development (43 to 46, 52, 53 and 67), the answers were grouped according to the student's degree of agreement for each assertion. The group of responses ranging between 1 and 2 was considered a negative position; neutral position, the group of responses ranging from 3, 4 and 7; and positive position, answers between 5 and 6. Answers 8 (not applicable) were not categorized.

The data collected were subsequently subjected to descriptive analysis with percentage distribution. Information was analyzed using SPSS® 13.0 software (IBM, Armonk, NY, USA) for Windows, applying 95% confidence in all tests. To verify whether there was an association, the Chi-Square test was used, and for categorical variables, Fisher's exact test. The results were presented in a table with the respective absolute and relative frequencies.

3 RESULTS

The 2016 ENADE student questionnaire was answered by 126 graduates of the IES under consideration, 94 from the full-time course and 32 from the night course.

The sociodemographic profile of the night students included a group with a majority of male student, with a mean age of 28.9 ± 6.08 years, single and white (according to self-declared race). Furthermore, it was pointed out that 2 (37.5%) students worked and provided for their family; 16

(50%) had a family income from 3 to 10 minimum wages; the majority (17 - 53.1%) came from a private school, while 14 (43.8%) night students attended high school at a public school; and their parents' educational level was up to high school (table 1).

When evaluating the quality of the didactic-pedagogical organization and infrastructure/physical facilities of the course, the students' perception was positive for the majority of the subcomponents (tables 2 and 3).

Further to these aspects, of the 23 items of which the category of didactic-pedagogical organization was composed, 21 (91%) produced a positive perception and only 2 were neutrally evaluated: "All students were offered opportunities to overcome difficulties related to the training process" (43.8%) and "The practical activities were sufficient to enable the course contents to be related to practice and contributed to their professional development" (46.9%) (table 2).

As regards the 12 components on infrastructure/physical facilities, 46.9% of the students had a neutral perception of the item "The environments and equipment for practical classes were adequate for the course", 34.4% had a negative position relative to the item "The equipment and materials available for practical classes were adequate for the number of students", and fewer than 50% (46.9%) expressed positive considerations that the cafeteria, canteen and restrooms provided were in adequate conditions and met the needs of their users (table 3)

When the graduates of full-time and night courses at the same IES were comparatively analyzed with regard to opportunities to expand academic and professional development, it was possible to observe that out of the total of 7 variables that made up this section of the questionnaire, only 2 variables showed statistically significant difference (table 4).

Table 1 - Characterization of students of Full-time and Night Courses in Dentistry at a Public Institution in a capital city in the Brazilian Northeast with regard to sociodemographic factors

Variables	Full-time Course n (%)	Night Course n (%)
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	24 (25.5)	18 (56)
Female	70 (74.5)	14 (44)
<i>Age</i>		
from 21 to 30	90 (96.0%)	22 (68.8)
From 31 to 40	4 (4.0%)	9 (28.1)
Over 40 years of age	-	1 (3.1)
<i>Marital status</i>		
Single	86 (91.5)	28 (87.5)
Married	7 (7.4)	3 (9.4)
Others	1 (1.1)	1 (3.1)
<i>Race</i>		
White	52 (55.3)	14 (44.0)
Black	4 (4.3)	4 (13.0)
Dark	32 (34)	11 (34.0)
Others	4 (4.3)	1 (3.0)
Did not wish to declare	2 (2.1)	2 (6.0)
<i>Family Income</i>		
From 1.5 to 3 minimum wages	24 (25.5)	13 (41.0)
Over 3 to 10 minimum wages	54 (57.4)	16 (50.0)
From 10 to 30 minimum wages	15 (16.0)	3 (9.0)
Over 10 minimum wages	1 (1.1)	-
<i>Work Situation</i>		
Does not work/Will eventually work	93 (97.9)	20 (62.5)
20 or more hours of work per week	2 (2.1)	12 (37.5)
<i>Type of school frequented in Medium Schooling</i>		
Entirely at public school	19 (20.2)	14 (44.0)
Entirely at private school	72 (76.6)	17 (53.0)
The major part at private school	3 (3.2)	1(3.0)
<i>Entrance by political means of affirmative action or social inclusion</i>		
No	79 (84)	19 (59.4)
Yes, by ethnic-racial criterion	-	1 (3.1)
Yes, because of having studied at a public or private school on a scholarship	14 (14.9)	11 (34.4)
Yes, by a system that combines one or more criteria.	1 (1.1)	1 (3.1)
<i>Mother's educational level</i>		
Educational level lower than Higher Education	40 (42.6)	18 (56)
Higher education.	27 (28.7)	8 (25)
Postgraduate	27 (28.7)	6 (19)
<i>Father's educational level</i>		
Educational level lower than Higher Education	55 (58.5)	21 (65.6)
Higher education.	27 (28.7)	8 (25)
Postgraduate	12 (12.8)	3 (9.4)
<i>Hours per week dedicated to studies</i>		
from 1 to 3 hours	38 (40.4)	13 (41)
from 4 to 7 hours	41 (43.6)	11 (34)
from 8 to 12 hours	12 (12.8)	6 (19)
Over 12 hours	3 (3.2)	2 (6)

Table 2 - Characterization of students of Night Courses in Dentistry at a Public Institution in a capital city in the Brazilian Northeast with regard to didactic-pedagogical Organization

Variables	Response:		
	Negative n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Positive n (%)
The disciplines studied contributed to your integral development as a citizen and professional	-	6 (19.0)	26 (81.0)
The contents approached in the disciplines of the course favored your actions in training courses or in professional initiation activities.	-	7 (22.0)	25 (78.0)
The teaching methodologies used in the course challenged you to acquire in depth knowledge and develop reflective and critical competences.	2 (6.0)	11 (34.5)	19 (59.5)
The course provided innovative learning experiences.	3 (9.0)	13 (41.0)	16 (50.0)
The course contributed to the development of your ethical consciousness for practicing the profession.	-	6 (19.0)	26 (81.0)
In the course, you had opportunity to learn and work in a team	1 (3.1)	3 (9.4)	28 (87.5)
The course enabled you to increase or capacity for reflection and argumentation.	2 (6.0)	6 (19.0)	24 (75.0)
The course promoted the development of your capacity for critical thinking, analyzing and reflection about solutions to the problems of society,	2 (6.0)	6 (19.0)	24 (75.0)
The course contributed to your capacity for communicating in oral and written forms.	3 (9.4)	9 (28.1)	20 (62.5)
The course contributed to the development of your capacity to learn and keep yourself permanently up to date.	1 (3.1)	5 (15.6)	26 (81.3)
The Student-Professor relationship throughout the course stimulated you to study and learn.	4 (12.0)	6 (19.0)	22 (69.0)
The teaching plans presented by the professors contributed to the development of academic activities and to your studies.	2 (6.3)	9 (28.1)	21 (65.6)
The bibliographic references indicated by the professors in the teaching plans contributed to your studies and learning.	1 (3.1)	9 (28.1)	22 (68.8)
Students were offered opportunities to overcome difficulties related to the process of qualification.	6 (19.0)	14 (44.0)	12 (37.0)
The course demanded frequent organization of and dedication to the studies.	-	1 (3.1)	31 (96.9)
The course favored articulation of theoretical knowledge of theoretical problems with practical activities.	-	6 (19.0)	26 (81.0)
The practical activities were sufficient to relate the contents of the course with the practice for your professional compromise	3 (9.0)	15 (47.0)	14 (44.0)
The curse provided access to up-to-date and/or contemporary knowledge in your area.	-	12 (37.5)	20 (62.5)
The supervised training provided a variety of experiences that contributed to your professional development.	-	6 (19.0)	26 (81.0)
The activities performed during conclusion of your course contributed to qualifying your professional development.	2 (6.0)	8 (25.0)	22 (69.0)
The assessments about learning made during the course were compatible with the contents or topics taught by the professors.	1 (3.0)	11 (34.0)	20 (63.0)
The professors demonstrated that they had command of the contents they covered in the disciplines.	-	4 (12.5)	28 (87.5)
The academic activities developed both within and outside of the classrooms enabled to reflect about, live with, and respect the diversity*	1 (3)	10 (31)	20 (63.0)

*1% of the responses were left blank or were not applicable.

Table 3 - Perception of students of Night Courses in Dentistry at a Public Institution in a capital city in the Brazilian Northeast with regard to infrastructure-physical installations [of the institution].

Variables	Response:		
	Negative n (%)	Neutral n (%)	Positive n (%)
The coordinators of the course were available to provide the students with academic guidance.	4 (12.5)	9 (28.1)	19 (59.4)
The students participated in periodical assessments of the course (disciplines, work of the professors, infrastructure	2 (6.0)	8 (25.0)	22 (69.0)
The professors made themselves available to attend the students outside of classroom hours.	2 (6.0)	10 (31.0)	20 (63.0)
The professors used information and communication technologies (ICTs) as a teaching strategy (multimedia projector, laboratory of informatics, virtual learning environment).	-	6 (19.0)	26 (81.0)
The institution made available a sufficient number of staff members to provide administrative and academic support.	1 (3.1)	10 (31.3)	21 (65.6)
The course made monitors or tutors available to help the students.	-	8 (25.0)	24 (75.0)
The classroom infrastructure conditions were adequate.	2 (6.3)	9 (28.1)	21 (65.6)
The equipment and materials available for practical activities were adequate for the number of students involved.	11 (34.5)	11 (34.5)	10 (31.0)
The environments and equipment provided for practical classes were suitable for the course.	8 (25.0)	15 (46.9)	9 (28.1)
The library provided the bibliographic references that the students needed.	1 (3.1)	13 (40.6)	18 (56.3)
The institution had a virtual library or provided access to works available in virtual archives*	3 (9.4)	8 (25.0)	18 (56.3)
The institution provided a refectory, canteen and toilet facilities in adequate conditions, which met the requirements of their users.	6 (19.0)	11 (34.0)	15 (47.0)

*9% of the responses were left blank or were not applicable.

4 DISCUSSION

The quality of undergraduate courses can be assessed by various instruments proposed by Sinaes⁸, in which it is possible to perceive that the perception of graduating students/alumnae contributes to the process of course management. The offer of the night course in Dentistry, as is the case with the other night classes, meets the requirements of a population consisting mostly of workers^{2,9,5}. The sociodemographic profile of the night course students in the present study,

included a group in which the majority were men, with a mean age of 28.9 years, single and white. This result was similar to the profile of dentistry students taking night classes, in Brazilian territory, and differed only in terms of the predominance of gender, since in relation to other national courses there was a predominance of female students^{9,10}.

In the present study, a wide age range was observed among the evening students (aged between 23 and 51 years), but who especially

fitted into the group in the second decade of life, similar to the situation found in other evening courses in the country^{2,9,10}.

Table 4 - Students responses about the opportunity for broadening their academic-professional development in both the full-time and night course of a public institution in a capital city of northeastern Brazil.

Variables	Course		p-value
	Full-time	Night	
<i>Students were offered opportunities to participate in programs, projects or university extension activities.</i>			
Negative Response	1 (1)	2 (6.3)	0.026*
Neutral Response	10 (11)	8 (25.0)	
Positive Response	83 (88)	22 (68.7)	
<i>Students were offered opportunities to participate in scientific initiation projects and in activities that encouraged academic investigation</i>			
Negative Response	4 (4.3)	2 (6.3)	0.343*
Neutral Response	19 (20.4)	10 (31.3)	
Positive Response	70 (75.3)	20 (62.4)	
<i>The course offered students conditions to participate in events that took place both within and/or outside of the institution.</i>			
Negative Response	6 (6)	2 (6.3)	(0.917)
Neutral Response	27 (29)	8 (25.0)	
Positive Response	61 (65)	22 (68.7)	
<i>The institution offered the students opportunities to act as representatives in collegiate bodies.</i>			
Negative Response	12 (15.4)	6 (20.0)	(0.476)
Neutral Response	22 (28.2)	11 (36.7)	
Positive Response	44 (56.4)	13 (43.3)	
<i>The students were offered opportunities to engage in interchanges and/or training programs in the country.</i>			
Negative Response	13 (15.3)	4 (14.2)	(0.277)
Neutral Response	23 (27.1)	12 (42.9)	
Positive Response	49 (57.6)	12 (42.9)	
<i>The students were offered opportunities to engage in interchanges and/or training programs outside of the country.</i>			
Negative Response	5 (5.7)	3 (9.6)	(0.049)
Neutral Response	21 (24.1)	14 (45.2)	
Positive Response	61 (70.2)	14 (45.2)	
<i>The institution promoted cultural, recreational and social interaction activities</i>			
Negative Response	14 (15.6)	8 (25.8)	0.368*
Neutral Response	32 (35.6)	8 (25.8)	
Positive Response	44 (48.8)	15 (48.4)	

* Exact Fisher; ** Chi-square Test

The Dentistry course is classified as being among the so-called elite courses in the Brazilian scenario, with a much higher per capita family income than the majority of the Brazilian population earns¹¹. According to the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), per capita household income in Brazil was R\$1,373.00 in 2018¹². Although most students in the course fitted into this profile, 40.6% of students in the evening course had a total family income of 1.5 to 3 minimum wages. Characteristics such as lower prevalence of females, older age, and low socioeconomic status were factors among the findings for evening students in a survey conducted at the Faculty of Dentistry of the São Paulo State University “Júlio de Mesquita Filho (UNESP) of São José dos Campos, where the authors traced differences in the profiles of students frequenting the institution's day and night courses¹³.

According to INEP,⁶ data, 76.6% of students in the day course at the institution under study attended primary school at a private school. This fact reinforces the findings of a study that related a higher percentage of students from private schools to the greater attractiveness of professions that have a better economic return, such as courses in Medicine, Dentistry and Engineering¹¹. However, in the evening course at the same institution, 43.8% of students had received their entire high school education at a public school, and 34.4% of them had entered the university by means of affirmative or social inclusion policies, because they had studied at a public or private school on a scholarship. According to the literature, this is the criterion most frequently used by public school students to gain access to public universities in the country¹⁴.

The quota law opened up important spaces for students from public schools and for less represented social groups. According to a survey that assessed the first three cycles of Enade, the

percentage of public school students at public universities in the country rose from 46% in the first cycle to 60% in the third cycle of the exam¹⁵.

As regards the parents' educational status, the sample was mostly composed of those who did not have a university degree. In Basil, it is possible to observe the gradual decrease in children of parents with higher education in all the courses. In the Dentistry course, this number fell from 53% to 31% between 1991 and 2012, which indicated that the economically disadvantaged classes had started having more opportunity to gain access to public universities at the national level¹⁵.

The present analysis showed that 37.5% of the students in the evening course were employed and had a workload of 20 hours or more. This change in the profile of academic students has been observed in studies conducted at other Brazilian universities, in an even more significant way than in the present study, in which over 50% of evening course students worked, and had a workload of up to 40 hours a week^{2,9,5}.

This survey indicated that 59.4% of students said they spent four or more hours per week on their studies. This may be related to the fact that 62.5% had no employment ties, and could dedicate themselves exclusively to their studies, unlike other national evening courses, in which the majority of evening students worked and had less time to dedicate to studies^{2,9,5}.

In general, the perception of students in the evening dentistry course, at the institution where the research was conducted, was positive regarding the didactic/pedagogical organization of the course and the infrastructural/physical facilities. These are recognized as being factors that motivate the students to attend school frequently¹⁶.

Less than 50% of the sample considered the number of practical classes in the course to be

sufficient. The lack of classes or practical activities was also mentioned as being unsatisfactory by students of other Dentistry courses in the Brazilian territory, reflecting their insecurity about providing comprehensive and good quality dental care^{13,17}.

A smaller portion of the students had a positive perception about the opportunities to overcome the difficulties related to the professional training process. The persistence of these difficulties may be related to abandonment of the course. Since similar findings have been identified, the Graduate Course in Pedagogy of the Federal University of Ceará (UFC) proposed a broad discussion on the need to create a coordination for the evening course, a fact that would make it possible to provide the students of this specific shift with better service. Another point that was identified and has to be matured and discussed within the internal scope of the coordination of undergraduate courses at UFC, was the need for systematic monitoring of students that had recently entered the universities¹⁸.

In the report analyzed, on the performance of the Dentistry course at the IES, it was observed that students were dissatisfied with the environments. equipment for practical classes, and the insufficient amounts of equipment and materials made available to meet the requirements of all the students. This perception was similar for students in both the day and night courses at the institution, indicating that dissatisfaction was related to the course in general, and not only to a particular day or night class⁶.

Another variable that showed the students' dissatisfaction in relation to the infrastructure/physical facilities of the institution, with reference to the availability of cafeteria, canteen and restrooms in adequate conditions. These were said to be services that

were essential for the permanence of students and teachers at the institution; that is, for the motivation of students and teachers to attend school, in addition to being related to academic performance^{1,5,16-18}.

The present study showed a significant difference in the indicators of internationalization and extension in the section of the students' questionnaire, when compared with the course at the same IESW, in full-time classes. The proposal of the policy to expand higher education to the night course continues to be fragmented with regard to the opportunity for complementary learning at public universities¹. There is a low offer of extracurricular activities for evening students during the time they are at college, restricting their participation in complementary activities for professional development^{5,18}.

The higher education system in Brazil is structured, above all, to contemplate the full-time student. Accepting the proposal of courses at night is challenging in relation to the conditions offered to this student, who after a day's work, goes out to seek the acquisition of knowledge, professional development and a higher education diploma¹⁷.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The present study pointed out that in general, the perception of alumnae of the night course in Dentistry at the public IES located in the Northeast of Brazil, in ENADE 2016, expressed positive results, allowing the inference of quality criteria. However, significant difference was found in the indicators of internationalization and extension in the section of the student questionnaire when compared with the full-time course at the same IES, suggesting weakness in development and in the articulation between the pillars of teaching, research and extension, which define the role of Brazilian

higher education institutions in society.

RESUMO

Percepção dos concluintes sobre a qualidade do curso noturno de Odontologia em instituição pública do nordeste brasileiro

O presente estudo objetivou avaliar a percepção de concluintes sobre a qualidade do curso noturno de uma instituição de ensino superior (IES), sediada em uma capital do Nordeste do Brasil, por meio das respostas ao questionário do estudante do Enade 2016. Tratou-se de uma pesquisa documental, cujos dados foram obtidos da planilha de microdados do Enade 2016, empregando o código da IES obtido no sistema eletrônico do Ministério da Educação (eMEC). As variáveis sociodemográficas foram utilizadas para caracterizar o perfil dos concluintes. As respostas foram agrupadas em positiva, neutra ou negativa para três seções do questionário: organização didático-pedagógica, infraestrutura/ instalações físicas do curso e ampliação da formação acadêmica-profissional. Os testes Qui-quadrado e Exato de Fisher, aplicados com 95% de confiança, foram utilizados para comparar as respostas dos cursos integral e noturno. O perfil sociodemográfico incluiu um grupo majoritariamente do sexo masculino, idade média de 28,9 anos, solteiros e brancos. Na avaliação da qualidade quanto à organização didático-pedagógica e infraestrutura/instalações físicas do curso, a percepção dos estudantes foi positiva para a maioria dos subcomponentes do questionário. A percepção dos egressos desse curso apresentou resultados positivos, caracterizando indicador de qualidade. Houve diferença estatisticamente significativa nas respostas dos estudantes do curso integral e noturno referentes às oportunidades de extensão, intercâmbios e/ou estágio internacional. O estudo indicou que este curso noturno não apresenta a mesma percepção de referencial de qualidade, pelos estudantes, quanto às atividades extracurriculares para formação profissional.

Descritores: Educação em Odontologia. Educação Superior. Avaliação Educacional.

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