



FO-UFRGS dental instrument loan bank: an affirmative policy for student permanence


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Abstract Dental instrument banks have emerged as an important affirmative action for student permanence in Dentistry course. This article aims to describe the building process of the dental instrument loan bank (BEI, for its acronym in Portuguese) at the School of Dentistry of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (FO-UFRGS) and to report on the strategies for tackling social inequalities during dental course. The BEI idea was born in 2021 by a students' group after discussing social inequalities during a remote class in the context of resuming practical activities with the easing of the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, the first loans were made. Students manage it, and its collection is acquired through donations. The BEI currently has a collection of 8,630 instruments and 1,601 consumables, having lent 3,000 items to 109 students in 171 requests over four academic semesters. In addition to instrument loans, the BEI has developed other initiatives that positively impact students' educational lives. The bank has been a welcoming space, as it encourages students to organize exchanges between themselves, forming a solidarity network. It has also participated in the working group reviewing the lists of instruments, encouraging their reduction to make Dentistry more accessible and fairer, allowing students from different backgrounds to have the opportunity to pursue their academic and professional careers. The BEI has established itself as a potential tool for democratizing Dentistry education at FO-UFRGS and reducing inequalities.

Descriptors: Public Policy. Universities. Dentistry. Equity. Social Discrimination.

Banco de préstamos de instrumentos FO-UFRGS: política afirmativa de retención de estudiantes

Resumen Los bancos de instrumentos aparecen como acciones afirmativas para la retención de estudiantes, importantes para la formación en Odontología. El objetivo de este artículo es describir el proceso de construcción del Banco de Préstamo de Instrumentos (BPI) en la Facultad de Odontología de la Universidad Federal de Rio Grande do Sul (FO-UFRGS) y reportar las estrategias para enfrentar las desigualdades sociales durante la formación en Odontología. La idea del BPI surgió en 2021, de un grupo de estudiantes después de una discusión sobre las desigualdades sociales durante una clase remota, en un contexto de reanudación de las actividades prácticas con el alivio de la pandemia de COVID-19. En 2022 se hizo efectivo con sus primeros préstamos realizados. Está gestionado por estudiantes y su colección se adquiere mediante donaciones. Actualmente, el BPI dispone de una colección de 8.630 instrumentos y 1.601 consumibles, y ha prestado 3.000 artículos a 109 estudiantes, en 171 solicitudes a lo largo de cuatro semestres académicos. Además del préstamo de instrumentos, el BPI ha desarrollado otras acciones que impactan positivamente en la vida académica de los estudiantes. El banco ha sido un espacio acogedor, ya que incentiva a los estudiantes a organizar intercambios entre ellos, formando una red de solidaridad. También ha participado en el grupo de trabajo para revisar las listas de instrumentos, fomentando su reducción para hacer la Odontología más accesible y justa, permitiendo a estudiantes de diferentes procedencias tener la oportunidad de desarrollar su carrera académica y profesional. El BPI se ha consolidado como una herramienta potencial para democratizar la formación en Odontología en la FO-UFRGS y reducir las desigualdades.

Descriptorios: Política Pública. Universidades. Odontología. Equidad. Discriminación Social.

Banco de empréstimo de instrumentais da Faculdade de Odontologia da FO-

UFRGS: política afirmativa de permanência estudantil

Resumo Os bancos de instrumentais surgem como uma ação afirmativa de permanência estudantil importante para a formação em Odontologia. O objetivo deste artigo é descrever o processo de construção do banco de empréstimo de instrumentais (BEI) da Faculdade de Odontologia da Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (FO-UFRGS) e relatar as estratégias para o enfrentamento das desigualdades sociais durante a formação em Odontologia. A ideia do BEI surgiu em 2021, por um grupo de estudantes após uma discussão sobre desigualdades sociais durante uma aula remota, num contexto de retomada das atividades práticas com o abrandamento da pandemia de COVID-19. Em 2022 teve sua efetivação com seus primeiros empréstimos realizados. A gestão é feita por estudantes e seu acervo adquirido mediante doações. Atualmente o BEI possui um acervo de 8.630 instrumentais e 1.601 materiais de consumo, tendo emprestado 3.000 itens para 109 estudantes, em 171 solicitações em quatro semestres letivos. Para além do empréstimo de instrumentais, o BEI tem desenvolvido outras ações que impactam positivamente a vida acadêmica dos estudantes. O banco tem sido um espaço de acolhida, uma vez que estimula a organização dos estudantes para trocas entre si, formando uma rede de solidariedade. Também tem participado do grupo de trabalho de revisão das listas de instrumentais, estimulando sua redução para tornar a Odontologia mais acessível e justa, permitindo que estudantes de diferentes origens possam ter a oportunidade de seguir suas carreiras acadêmicas e profissionais. O BEI se consolidou como uma potencial ferramenta para democratização da formação em Odontologia na FO-UFRGS e redução das desigualdades.

Descritores: Política Pública. Universidades. Odontologia. Equidade. Discriminação Social.

INTRODUCTION

Affirmative policies are a set of public policies developed to review social inequalities, guaranteeing access to social rights for certain groups. In Brazil, affirmative measures have emerged as a method to socially insert minority groups with a history of exclusion, mainly through the quota program¹. Law No. 12.711/2012, known as the Quotas Law, guarantees that part of the places offered by federal universities will be reserved for discriminated groups, such as black, brown, and indigenous people, students who have attended secondary school entirely in public schools, and those whose family income is equal to or less than 1.5 minimum wages per capita². The admission of students by quotas at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) began with the 2008 entrance exam and currently covers 50% of undergraduate places³.

The quota program guarantees the entry of these groups but does not guarantee their permanence. Given this reality, the National Student Assistance Policy - PNAES (for its acronym in Portuguese), implemented by Decree 7.234 of July 19, 2010, stipulates that all federal universities must provide conditions to stay and complete their degree for students with socio-economic vulnerability. As such, student assistance actions must cover student housing, food, transportation, health care, culture, sport, and daycare⁴. At the same time, on May 9, 2013, Ordinance No. 389 was published in the Federal Official Gazette and discussed in its first article the permanence programs, such as scholarships for undergraduate students at federal higher education institutions⁵.

Education in Dentistry requires a significant financial investment from students and their families to purchase the instruments and materials needed to carry out practical laboratory and clinical activities. A study by the Brazilian Dental Education Association (ABENO for its acronym in Portuguese) named 157 essential items for Dentistry education, following the National Curriculum Guidelines (DCN for its acronym in Portuguese)⁶. However, this list does not include consumables such as drills, diamond tips, matrices, endodontic files, and many others. On the other hand, the public list available on the website of the UFRGS School of Dentistry (FO-UFRGS) exceeds the total number of items on the ABENO essential list and, if all the materials requested are considered, totals about 413 items⁷.

It is estimated that the investment in instruments during the Dentistry course is about R\$12,000.00⁸. These figures are likely higher considering the number of instruments requested on public lists and, currently, the price increase. At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, personal protective equipment (PPE) had an exaggerated rise in price due to the high demand for these items by the general population⁹, especially surgical masks, disposable caps and procedural gloves, making Dentistry course even more expensive during this period.

In the quest to democratize education, the creation of dental instrument loan banks at federal universities has emerged as a counterpoint to the suspension and evasion of Dentistry courses and may be contributing to student permanence¹⁰. Several initiatives can be mentioned, such as those of the State University of Feira de Santana¹¹, the Fluminense Federal University¹⁰, the Federal University of Pará¹² and the State University of Londrina¹³. In addition, the Federal University of Espírito Santo offers aid for dental materials purchase¹⁴. On the other hand, the Federal University of Mato Grosso¹⁵ do Sul, the Federal University of Goiás¹⁶ and the Federal University of Pelotas¹⁷ have material aid which distributes dental kits with essential materials for learning and performing laboratory and clinical activities, following the Course Pedagogical Project's demands, targeting students in situations of social vulnerability.

There are two outstanding student permanence programs for Dentistry course at FO-UFRGS: the Dentistry Education Material Aid (AME-ODONTO, for its acronym in Portuguese) and the Dental Instrument Loan Bank of the UFRGS School of Dentistry. AME-ODONTO is aimed at students who are members of the Dean of Student Affairs (PRAE) Benefits Program and are actively involved in the undergraduate Dentistry course. It allocates about R\$100,000.00 divided among the applicant students, via a public notice, to purchase materials for subjects with compulsory practical activities¹⁸. This amount, divided among the applicants, does not cover all the costs the student has to pay for the requested instruments. Because of this, in 2022, the BEI emerged as an affirmative measure policy that aids PRAE students who do not have the total amount covered and all students, regardless of income.

With this in mind, this article aims to describe the process of creating, developing, and operating the BEI FO-UFRGS, report on strategies for tackling social inequalities, and discuss training in Dentistry in relation to students' profiles and the world of work.

EXPERIENCE REPORT

The idea and need to create a dental instrument bank at FO-UFRGS arose in September 2021 during a debate on health' social inequalities in the Oral Epidemiology curricular unit, where a student group brought up the difficulty of purchasing materials requested by the subjects they were going to take that semester and which would probably increase inequalities since some students would not be able to acquire the supplies to carry out the classes in time. During this period, plans were being made to resume face-to-face practical activities, which were suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.

The general rise in products' prices due to the pandemic made it no different with dental materials⁹. In addition, the socio-economic situation of many students was also aggravated by the pandemic, with a reduction or loss of income. In addition, the socio-economic situation of many students was also aggravated by the pandemic, with an income reduction or loss. Based on this debate, these students mobilized with other classes going through or had already gone through the same misfortune. Students held several meetings with the subject's teacher, the Undergraduate Course Committee (COMGRAD for its acronym in Portuguese), the Academic Directory (AD), and the Unit's Management, thinking about how to create a loan bank for instruments so that students wouldn't have to buy all the numerous instruments requested in the subject lists, to reduce costs for each student and families.

To set up the BEI FO-UFRGS, information was sought from institutions with dental instrument banks in operation, by searching the Internet, institutional websites, and published articles. Online meetings were also held with the instrument bank teams from the University of Rio de Janeiro and the Fluminense Federal University to exchange information on the organization and management of these banks.

Initially, a set of rules and guidelines was created to help organize and run the bank based on the existing banks' records. However, with the urgency to make the loans, since the course semester was starting, it wasn't possible to follow all the rules in the regulations.

To start things off, the unit's management allocated a room on the 4th floor of the School of Dentistry to install the BEI FO-UFRGS. The first instruments to start operating came from the unit itself. They were instruments stored in a warehouse, most of them forgotten in the clinics and sterilization sector, where they had been stored for years and whose owners had not returned to collect them. A joint effort was made to clean the room, and the instruments were received and cataloged.

The BEI FO-UFRGS is supplied by donations, whether from graduates, clinics that have closed down and donated their instruments, retired professionals, professors, and any person or company with dental equipment that can be donated. Many students also donate materials they have acquired and are no longer using. An Instagram page was created to publicize the bank and campaigns to collect materials. Posts to publicize the BEI are also forwarded to WhatsApp groups and have a wide reach. Today, the BEI FO-UFRGS has about 8,630 permanent loan instruments and approximately 1,601 consumables such as drills, endodontic files, brushes and others.

Students can request to lend instruments at any time. However, for better organization, the BEI team opens an electronic form for students to express their interest in lending instruments at the beginning of each semester. This form asks for information such as full name, e-mail address, ID card number, whether the student is or not a PRAE beneficiary, whether a day or evening course enrolled, the current semester, expected graduation date, telephone number, address, enrolled subjects and an open field for suggestions. This form is publicized by an e-mail sent by the Dentistry Teaching Center to all students, informing them of that semester's loan opening, with a link and deadline for filling out the form. After the deadline, the BEI team sends an e-mail to all those who expressed an interest, attaching a spreadsheet with all the instruments available in the BEI's collection and stock. In this spreadsheet, the student marks the required instruments and quantity, saves them under their name, and returns the form to the bank. This form was created to speed up the loan process, as this is when most of the requests occur, since students are getting organized for the beginning of semester activities.

Students from different semesters sort the instruments and manage the bank. When the completed forms are received, the team consolidates them into a single spreadsheet to check the total number of items requested and the stock availability in the bank. Students who have requested material are registered in the system based on the information provided. With this information, it is possible to organize the requests in order of priority. First, the instruments requested by students benefiting from PRAE are separated. Within this category, they are separated by academic semester, with priority given to students further along in their course. Lastly, the instruments requested by other students are separated, maintaining the same priority as the most advanced academic semester. It is important to note that if two or more students request material that the bank only has one unit, the priorities are respected, and, if necessary, the team draws lots to determine the distribution of the material among the requesters.

When picking up the instruments, the student signs a loan agreement containing personal information such as name, ID card number, e-mail address, telephone number, semester in progress, loan period, course in progress, and the list and quantity of instruments picked up. The agreement also includes responsibility for keeping and returning the items clean and sterilized within the established period and a commitment to replace them in case of loss or damage. When a high-speed turbine and/or micromotor and/or straight piece is borrowed, the student informs the bank coordinators immediately of any malfunction or damage.

In the first and second semesters of loans, the EIB kept a record of instruments in a single spreadsheet, which contained a list of the materials, the collection, the number of loans made, the quantity in stock, and each student's name who took the material, along with the respective amount. When a student returned the material, the team updated the list, subtracting the quantity returned to ensure that the spreadsheet formula accurately reflected the exact stock availability for future loans. However, this approach was problematic, as some information on the students who had returned the items was lost, including data relevant to the research, such as the precise number of loans made. Faced with this

situation, the team contacted Equilíbrio, a Junior Economics Company at UFRGS, which kindly created more elaborate spreadsheets that allow the bank to be managed while maintaining all the necessary information.

The BEI FO-UFRGS results from student mobilization and organization, similar to the initiative of a public university in Bahia¹⁰. However, in this case, the bank's management was reformulated due to difficulties, and the oral health assistants are currently managing it. The instruments are organized into kits that students can take at the beginning of the shift and return at the end after being washed and packaged for sterilization. This is undoubtedly an ideal situation since the university has enough kits to lend to its students, which avoids the expensive buying of instruments. However, at FO-UFRGS, there are currently no auxiliary staff available to organize the bank, nor are there enough kits for all the students enrolled.

Throughout its recent history, the BEI FO-UFRGS has assisted 109 students in making 171 loans since the same student can request it more than once. Of these students, 42 (38.5%) are PRAE beneficiaries, and 68 (61.5%) are not. In addition, about 89.3% of the students are from the day program, and about 10.7% from the evening program. About 3,000 items have been made available to students in the four semesters of BEI's operation. Table 1 details the number of items in the collection and the total number of students who requested loans per semester. The collection has grown considerably over the period and currently has more than 10,000 items, both consumable and non-consumable. Consumables are disposable materials that students take from the bank and don't return, such as drills, microbrushes, metal matrices, wedges, etc. The instruments most frequently borrowed by the BEI are clinical cotton tweezers, dental mirrors with handle, exploratory probe, carpule syringe, and dentin spoon. With the collection expansion, students have met almost all their requests for instruments in recent semesters. As a result, few items need to be purchased to complete the list requested, resulting in a significant reduction in the financial impact over the semesters.

Table 1. Loans per academic semester.

Semester	2021/2	2022/1	2022/2	2023/1
Collection	≈1,000 instruments	≈5,000 instruments	9,470 items 1,720 consumables 8,626 instruments	10. 231 items 1,601 consumables 8,630 instruments
PRAE loans	16 students	26 students	13 students	17 students
Non PRAE loans	5 students	22 students	39 students	33 students
Total of loans	21 students	48 students	52 students	50 students

In addition to loaning instruments, the BEI has participated in essential discussion spaces within the academic unit, representing students and their demands. A significant action by the BEI was its active involvement in reviewing the instruments' lists, created at the unit's request to respond to questions and complaints, many of them from students and the majority, about the quantity and need for requested instruments. A working group comprised a representative from each clinical area, the unit's management, and two members of the BEI. This group worked together, analyzing and revising the lists to reduce and redistribute the items. The desire was to achieve a more equitable requested materials' distribution, intending to dilute the costs related to the 4th and 5th semesters of the day course and the 5th, 6th, and 7th semesters of the evening course, which were (and still are) the semesters with the most expensive materials lists. These semesters include the Pre-Clinical, Dental Materials, Clinical I and Anesthesiology, and Introduction to Exodontics courses, which require a greater quantity of instruments and, therefore, a greater need for financial investment by the students.

To contribute effectively to the working group, the BEI consulted students regarding the lists, and many indicated that the requested materials were of little or no use throughout the course. This consultation was carried out in July 2022 with enrolled students and had 54 respondents, 35 of whom were in advanced semesters of the course (from the day course's 8th semester and the evening course's 11th semester). The list was not reduced despite the consultation and

student demands. However, the quantities requested were redistributed again, diluting them between the semesters. A recent ABENO study suggests an essential instrument list for education in Dentistry to help institutions draw up their lists⁶. Still, at FO-UFRGS, this list goes far beyond what is indicated. A list of basic instruments is necessary to break away from the elitist culture of Dentistry¹⁰. The great benefit of revising the lists is that they have become public and are available on the course website⁷. Previously, these lists were drawn up individually by the lecturer and teachers of the practical subjects and provided to the students enrolled in each subject separately. Making the lists public facilitates organization and planning for dental students, both current and future, as well as avoiding repeated instruments or those with different names.

The BEI also assisted PRAE in organizing AME-Odonto, a student assistance program dedicated exclusively to acquiring dental materials needed for compulsory subjects. Financial resources go directly to the student. The amount that students can receive is partially determined based on requests made according to the subjects they are enrolled in, considering factors such as the total amount requested, the individual income of each student, and the availability of resources in PRAE's budget planning.

The BEI surveyed the materials' prices for each subject, considering the public instrument list, which PRAE used as a reference for distributing the resource among the applicants. The prices can be found in the public notices on the official PRAE-UFRGS website¹². The amount awarded may be less than requested, depending on the mentioned circumstances. Most of the time, the funding received by the student is less than that requested and partially covers the costs. This resource is estimated to cover between 15% and 47% of the amount requested by the students. Even though it doesn't cover all the costs, this resource has been fundamental for PRAE beneficiary students to stay on the course and acquire necessary materials, especially PPE and consumables rarely found in the BEI's stock.

The BEI has also been a space for welcoming students and discussing training and the world of work. Open meetings have been organized to discuss the lists, student aid, and difficulties faced in practical activities with COMGRAD and students. In addition to discussing the long lists and the high cost of instruments, it is important to note that the world of work has also changed, and institutions need to consider this when planning courses. Currently, graduates are working in public services or private clinics that are already equipped¹⁹, and the instruments they acquired during their course are optional for practicing the profession. This change is evidenced by the common practice of many students, who sell their instruments as soon as they graduate. In addition, the bank has the challenge of showing the academic community the diversity and inequalities in the course, seeking to mobilize people to tackle them.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Creating an instrument bank in public institutions is considered an important measure to maintain student permanence, as the BEI FO-UFRGS shows. This initiative significantly impacts the academic lives of students who benefit from PRAE and also those not part of the program, seeking to provide equity in education for dental students.

Another aspect of great importance in defending the creation of loan banks at public universities is the world of work's transformation in Dentistry. In the past, it was common for recent dental graduates to set up their own practices, which justified the purchase of all the instruments during graduation. However, due to changes in the world of work, many dental graduates are looking for work opportunities in the public service or in practices and clinics that already have instruments available. This change is evidenced by the common practice that many students sell their instruments as soon as they graduate.

The BEI has also welcomed students, playing an important role in providing an environment conducive to sharing experiences. The diversity of students at different stages of the course fosters these interactions, resulting in mutual collaboration. The bank has established itself as a potential tool for democratizing and reducing inequalities in the Dentistry course at FO-UFRGS.

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