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[Translated review article]

**Confluence of guiding theoretical perspectives for the integral training of
dentistry students**

**Confluencia de perspectivas teóricas orientadoras para la formación integral
del estudiante de Estomatología**

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ABSTRACT

The integral training of professionals acquires relevance in the current transformations of Cuban higher education, as the highest expression of quality of graduates. However, cognitive and methodological gaps in this process need to be filled. Hence, a master's research is developed as part of the project: *Scientific-methodological conception for the improvement of the integral training process of university students* at the University of Sancti Spíritus "José Martí Pérez", from which this paper is derived with the aim of analyzing the theoretical knowledge that supports and guides the integral training of Dentistry students. The bibliographic information covers the period from 2010 to 2023. Qualitative criteria are taken into account for the analysis of this information, based on the search descriptors: integral training; integral training-higher education; integral training-medical sciences; integral training-dentistry. The document analysis method is used, combined with analysis-synthesis, historical-logical, induction-deduction. Despite the few scientific publications on the subject in Dentistry, the content of the paper reveals an optimistic and guiding panorama, where knowledge from political, legal, normative and scientific perspectives in other university majors converge, helping to channel the theoretical bases of integral training of Dentistry students.

Keywords: dentistry; higher education; integral training; university students

RESUMEN

La formación integral del profesional adquiere relevancia en las actuales transformaciones de la educación superior cubana, como máxima expresión de calidad del egresado; sin embargo, se requiere suplir carencias cognitivas y metodológicas sobre este proceso. A propósito se desarrolla una investigación de maestría, perteneciente al proyecto: *Concepción científico-metodológica para el mejoramiento del proceso de formación integral del estudiante universitario*, de la Universidad de Sancti Spíritus "José Martí Pérez", de la que se deriva este artículo

que tiene el objetivo de analizar conocimientos teóricos que sustentan y orientan hacia la formación integral del estudiante de Estomatología. La información bibliográfica abarca del 2010 al 2023. Para el análisis de esta se tienen en cuenta criterios cualitativos, a partir de los descriptores de búsqueda: formación integral; formación integral-educación superior; formación integral-ciencias médicas; formación integral-Estomatología. Se emplea el método de estudio de documentos, combinado con el análisis-síntesis, histórico-lógico, inducción-deducción. A pesar de las pocas publicaciones científicas relativas al tema en Estomatología, el contenido del artículo revela un panorama optimista y orientador, donde confluyen conocimientos, desde las perspectivas política, legal, normativa y científica, en otras carreras universitarias, que ayudan a canalizar las bases teóricas de la formación integral en la carrera de Estomatología.

Palabras clave: enseñanza superior; estudiante universitario; formación integral; odontología

Introduction

The four generations of curricula, in Stomatology major, preceding the current Plan “E”, with its corresponding curricular improvements, since the creation, in 1976, of the Ministry of Higher Education (MES, Spanish acronym), constitute expressions of the economic, scientific, technological, health, cultural, educational and social transformations experienced in the country in response to the conditions of the national and international context (Vela Valdés et al., 2018; MES, 2020).

In this historical, dialectical and materialistic becoming to achieve a formation of greater professional excellence in the Stomatology graduate, the most notable innovations are focused, according to MES (2020), on:

- Introduction of pre-professional practice in fifth year.
- Decentralization of the students' health care work in the last year.
- Integrality in relation to stomatological care, based on a program with a clinical-epidemiological, educational and social approach, having as pillars: community participation, intersectoriality and equity.

- Training of a stomatologist with a broad profile, able to solve the general and frequent problems of Public Health in Cuba and in the world, specifically those related to the oral health of the Cuban population.
- Inclusion of the contents of Informatics and History of Cuba in the curriculum.
- Insertion of the Main Integrative Discipline in the different years of training in which all subjects are grouped around Education at Work, as the main form of teaching and paradigm of medical education in Cuba, to form the modes of professional performance.
- Consolidation of values in the humanistic sense of the profession.
- Greater rationalization and flexibility of learning.

With a renewed vision, the authors Tan Suárez et al. (2023) argue that the current Study Plan “E” of Stomatology, is projected towards:

- The reduction of the number of subjects of the base curriculum on the principle of not repeating contents and achieving a higher level of essentiality.
- The improvement of the conception of the Main Integrative Discipline, more focused on the object of the profession and with greater clarity of the intra, inter and transdisciplinary work, both vertically and horizontally in the different academic years.
- The linking of students, from the first year of training, to a health area so that they can provide comprehensive stomatological care to the corresponding population, from the Education at Work.
- A very close relationship of the training with the employer organizations, fundamentally the service and research centers of the Ministry of Public Health (MINSAP, Spanish acronym), as the real scenarios of training of these professionals: stomatological clinics, polyclinics, hospitals (clinical-surgical, pediatric, general, municipal, local and rural); services in schools, labor, social centers, research institutes, hygiene and epidemiology units.
- The development of communication skills in students, from the first year of training, with patients, families and the community, in health promotion and

education activities, through teamwork with students from the course itself, from other universities and from technical education.

- The teaching of English in the eight semesters to reach an internationally accredited exit level, which takes as a reference the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching and evaluation.
- The enhancement of autonomous, developmental learning with active and protagonist participation of students in their education, especially in on-the-job education.
- The realization of the fifth year without teaching new content, centered on pre-professional practice, where the student can make decisions under the supervision of the tutors of the work-integrated learning.
- Greater articulation between undergraduate and postgraduate to ensure continuing education, based on the Specialization in Comprehensive General Stomatology.

All these advances experienced by the curricula, are in full correspondence with the strategic vision of the Cuban State, given the imperative need to raise the quality of education to achieve the integral training of the student. This is a supreme objective reflected in the documents that outline the political (Communist Party of Cuba [PCC, Spanish acronym], 2017) and legal (National Assembly of People's Power [ANPP, Spanish acronym], 2019) framework, in response to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reflected in the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goal 4 (UN, 2015).

Corresponding to the above, MES (2016) states that:

A claim of these times is the strengthening of the integral training of students, due to the multiple problems that arise in the national and international socioeconomic context, and that unfavorably influence the effectiveness of the educational and ideological political work that is developed with students in universities. (p. 9)

Thus, the integral training of Stomatology students has to respond to these demands and must be concretized in achieving competent graduates for professional performance, with a solid ideological political development, a broad

scientific, ethical, legal, humanistic, economic and environmental culture; committed to the just causes of humanity and the exercise of full citizenship.

However, these aspirations require a greater theoretical deepening that helps to sustain and guide, scientifically in practice, this concept of integral training of the student majoring in Stomatology, in terms of paradigm. As a possible answer to this problem, a master's degree research is developed, in progress, which takes place at the University of Medical Sciences "Dr. Faustino Pérez Hernández". It belongs to the institutional scientific project: *Scientific-methodological conception for the improvement of the process of integral training of university students*, of the Center of Studies of Education Sciences of the University of Sancti Spíritus "José Martí Pérez", in an articulated and interinstitutional cooperation work. This article is derived from this research, with the objective of analyzing theoretical knowledge that sustains and orients towards the integral training of Stomatology students.

To achieve the objective, an extensive bibliographic management activity is developed covering the period from 2010 to 2023, based on the following search descriptors: integral training; integral training-higher education; integral training-medical sciences; integral training-Stomatology. The selection, processing, critical interpretation and generalization of the theoretical information obtained is carried out by means of the empirical method of document analysis, combined with other theoretical methods such as analysis-synthesis, historical-logical, and induction-deduction. The content of the article is organized taking into account qualitative criteria of political, legal, normative and scientific nature, in virtue of finding the concurrence of all these perspectives that help to perceive, understand and better channel the process of integral training in Stomatology courses.

The main motivation to publish this article within the field of interest of this journal is due to the recommendation of a team of authors from Sancti Spiritus (Mursuli Sosa et al., 2020), based on a study on the trend of publications on Stomatology in the province. This study shows few publications on the subject of human resources training; therefore, this article is not only a first in the territory, but also has great

relevance for its contribution to the improvement of integral training in higher education.

Discussion

Like any other science, the history of stomatology is characterized by the fact that it began in an empirical way and later became what it is today: a defined and exact science. Like all branches of human knowledge, in this long pilgrimage it passes, evolves and progresses through different stages, in accordance with the very nature of the profession, in its triple biomedical, technical and social character. Together with the progress of Stomatology, as a health science, which is projected and imprints a characteristic stamp on it, the training process of those who study it also progresses.

The evolution of the study plans of Stomatology in Cuba responds, to a great extent, to historical contexts that mark the sense of the integral formation of these professionals. It is not until the academic year 1969-1970 that a study plan is established by hemi-phases with an integrated teaching, both vertical and horizontal, in which teaching, assistance and research are combined with education at work, as the basic pillars on which the teaching and learning of Stomatology are based, in order to achieve a more complete development of the graduate, as evidenced in the successive study plans (Tan Suárez et al., 2023).

For the authors Valera Sierra (2010), Nova Herrera (2016) and Cedeño Díaz et al. (2019), the term and the definition of what is understood by integral student training, has been considered a controversial issue for a long time, to which Stomatology training is not exempt. This concept goes through dissimilar criticisms, appreciations and approaches, both theoretical and practical, by the various curricula, which confirm the continuous transformations of the processes and educational teaching scenarios of the institutions that assume this function, given the commitment made to society, to which the graduates are delivered.

In fact, to understand the sense that gains the integral training of the student in any university career, the first thing is to become aware that more than an aspiration, it responds to the need for the human beings to deploy, to the fullest and in a merged

way, all their potentialities: biological, psychic and social; from a viable articulation between the possibilities and resources that people possess for self-formation with all those external influences, human and material, that they receive in the different contexts where they interact (Villegas Villegas et al., 2019; Pino Calderón and Parra Vigo, 2021).

To achieve the above, Cuba has the official support of the State, whose political will is set forth in Chapter 4: Main Characteristics of Social Policy, of the Cuban Economic and Social Model of Socialist Development:

Social policy is essential and inherent to the entire Model, which is why it imprints peculiarities on it based on the principle that the fundamental objective is the human beings and their integral development. More than expenses, the resources allocated to these purposes constitute investment in economic and social development. (PCC, 2017, p. 11).

In the chapter itself of the alluded source, within subsection 4.1 Economic and social rights and duties, the collective responsibility and the sustained interrelation of all the factors involved in the achievement of integral training is emphasized:

The State, the Government, families, community actors, labor collectives, the media and other competent institutions - among which a permanent linkage is favored and propitiated - play a decisive role in the process of education and integral training of citizens, especially the new generations. (p. 11)

Likewise, the main document guiding public life, the *Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*, legitimizes it in Article 46 of Chapter II: "All persons have the right to life, physical and moral integrity, freedom, justice, security, peace, health, education, culture, recreation, sports and to their integral development" (ANPP, 2019, p. 80); and to accentuate the commitment of the educational system in the fulfillment of that right, it is stated in Article 73 of the same document:

Education is a right of all persons and a responsibility of the State, which guarantees free, affordable and quality education services for integral training, from early childhood to postgraduate university education.

The State, in order to make this right effective, establishes a broad system of educational institutions in all types and levels of education, which provides the possibility of studying at any stage of life according to aptitudes, social demands and the needs of the economic-social development of the country. (ANPP, 2019, p. 83).

With great clarity, both guiding documents focus on the integral training of the personality as a citizen's right, in which the State, society and families, jointly, have the duty to protect, promote and ensure; without failing to recognize that the educational institutions are the ones that assume the task of deploying in students the range of potentialities they possess, based on the rational and creative use of all available material and human resources.

Consistent with the above, MES (2022) establishes the regulatory framework of the management system of the integral training process of the university student by stating:

The objectives of socioeconomic development of the country, together with the particularities of university education in the current era, lead to the improvement of Cuban higher education; which requires the need to review the current regulations, with the aim of responding to the desired levels of quality in the process of integral training, for future professionals in the country. (p.1).

Another of the ministerial guidelines of the previous document outlines the double meaning of integral training, as a process and as a result:

The training of higher level professionals is the process that, consciously and on a scientific basis, is developed in higher education institutions to ensure the integral preparation of students in university courses, which takes the form of a solid scientific-technical, humanistic and high ideological, political, ethical and aesthetic values; in order to achieve revolutionary, educated, competent, independent and creative professionals so that they can perform successfully in the various sectors of the economy and society in general. (MES, 2022, pp. 2-3).

It is in this dialectical relationship between process and result that integral training is defined and specified in terms of paradigm for Cuban higher education (MES, 2014, 2016, 2022), from a pedagogical conception that advocates the coherence of the most progressive postulates of Cuban and foreign educators with the scientific-technical advances in training, present in each historical moment, from sustaining the concept in three guiding ideas: 1) the indissoluble unity between the instructive, educational and developmental aspects of teaching, with a view to achieving the cognitive, volitional and proactive formation of the personality; 2) the link of study and work as an expression of that meshing of theory with practice, generating, at the same time, modes of professional performance; and 3) the relationship of the curriculum with life, in direct contact with the institutional, community, local, territorial, national and international reality, preparing to face problems generated in these environments, either with proposals for innovative concrete solutions, or to cooperate or know how to assume a resilient attitude.

In the case of the major Stomatology, these principles should be applied in a concrete and creative way in the educational teaching process, in all the subjects of the different disciplines. It should be performed as to guarantee, from the curriculum, the mastery of the modes of professional performance and the necessary competences to achieve graduates with general and integral culture, suitable to perform in the different institutions of the National Health System and outside the country, if necessary, either in normal or special conditions (Tan Suárez et al., 2023).

It is important, when applying these principles, that the curricular design of student training in the major Stomatology continues to assume the pedagogical model by objectives and based on the development of skills. However, there are indications and experiences of competence-based training that seek a meshing between knowing, being and doing, as assured by Valverde Grandal and Rosales Reyes (2017), Alarcón Ortiz et al. (2019) and Velázquez et al. (2019). This, without failing to recognize the limitations that, so far, the integral training of the Stomatology student present in the aspects framed in the affective-volitional sphere in Cuba, as

stated by Tan Suárez et al. (2023) and in other latitudes of the world, as assured by Bueno Hernández et al. (2019), Nova Herrera (2021) and Obispo Díaz (2021).

There are other significant methodological indications and generators of this semantic duality of the concept of integral training made explicit, in a sustained manner, by MES (2014, 2016, 2022) that clarify and reinforce the creative application of the above principles:

- The integration of academic, work and research activities that implies the design of actions, from the educational strategy of the specialty and each academic year, to favor: professional and vocational guidance, active participation, individual and collective protagonism, self-management of knowledge, critical reflection and, consequently, the development of teaching, scientific and professional practice skills.
- The coherent and balanced articulation of the three dimensions: curricular, extensionist and socio-political, when planning the collective and individual actions of the educational strategy of the specialty and of each academic year. The following should be taken into account: the graduate attributes, the diagnosis of the group of students and of each one in particular, the objectives established for the academic year, together with other educational needs or suggestions from students, professors, families, directors of the faculties, the institution, the teaching units linked to the courses; as well as, other constraints that arise from vertical character at the level of the territory and the country.
- The precision and establishment of intradisciplinary (subjects of the discipline itself) and interdisciplinary (other disciplines of the program) links that prepare students in the solution of professional problems with a holistic approach.
- The correlation between the courses that are designed to complement the basic curriculum of the Study Plan:
 - ✓ Own curriculum courses: the contents meet specific needs of regional advancement and give answers to strategies of MINSAP as a training body.

- ✓ Elective curriculum courses: the contents expand and update on scientific topics related to the profession; they are offered by at the suggestion of the academic year groups.
- ✓ Elective curriculum courses: the contents must constitute a contribution to the general culture of the future professional; they are freely chosen by students according to their personal tastes and interests, from a group of offers provided by the center or by other majors and institutions of Higher Education in the territory.
- The adequate combination, hierarchization and instrumentation of the curricular strategies oriented in the study plan of each major, although others may be implemented that respond to the needs of the institutions or of an academic year, which are integrated to the contents of the subjects of the discipline.

Tan Suárez et al. (2023) specify these curricular strategies in the major Stomatology outlined in Study Plan “E”:

- Curricular strategy for the educational and ethical work of students: focused on strengthening political and ideological aspects from a solid humanistic position, based on the Principles of Medical Ethics in the world and on the moral values that dignify the profession of Stomatologist in the Cuban socialist society: patriotism, humanism, solidarity, responsibility, industriousness, honesty, justice and anti-imperialism.
- Curricular strategy for communication in a foreign language: aimed at the use of oral and written English provided the importance of this language in the contemporary world for the promotion of any profession.
- Curricular strategy for the research function and the use of informatics: oriented to the strengthening of knowledge and research skills that encourage a scientific and innovative attitude to solve real problems in the stomatologist's work, to the extent that participation in student scientific groups, research projects, publications and scientific events is stimulated. At the same time, it systematizes the use of information and communication technology tools, as well as their applications and specificities in the health sector.

- Curricular strategy for training and professional performance in the face of war and natural disasters and environmental protection: focused on strengthening professional skills, interests, attitudes and behaviors related to the hygienic-epidemiological, environmental and social approach to health problems, preparing for the execution of actions for the promotion, prevention, recovery and rehabilitation of oral health of individuals, families and communities in normal and special situations.
- Curricular strategy for the indications and uses of Natural and Traditional Medicine: focused on the acquisition of scientific knowledge about therapeutic tools supported by this type of medicine, with low treatment cost and few side effects, applicable to many oral health problems, both acute and chronic and, above all, its use in various scenarios of Primary Health Care and in situations of health contingencies or disasters of different types.
- Curricular strategy for pedagogical, historical and philosophical training focused on three important issues. First, the general didactic preparation that allows to assume the educational function of the stomatologist in activities of health promotion and prevention in the work, family and community context, or to exercise the teaching function in his specialty or in others of related profiles, or to execute the work of tutor in the integrated practical training. Second, the deepening of knowledge of the national and international history of the profession; also, about the history of Cuba and the world as part of the general culture of the professional. Third, to contribute to the mastery of the scientific philosophical conception of the world, from the dialectical-materialist point of view, in the use of clinical, epidemiological and social methods.
- Curricular strategy for the development of skills in the administrative function, economic and legal training: aimed at the preparation in the application of management methods in the administration of clinics, stomatological services of different levels of complexity, or as heads of programs. Also, for the rational and effective use of human, material and financial resources of the organizational

units where they can perform; and the knowledge and compliance with the law in the operation of the National Health System.

- Curricular strategy for the Mother Tongue: projected to favor appropriate professional verbal and gestural linguistic behaviors that require the mastery of the skills of reading, analysis, comprehension, writing, construction of academic, scientific and communication discourse in their daily work.

All these methodological projections offer ample possibilities to work, from the educational teaching process in the major Stomatology, the concept of integral training in Cuban higher education, defined by MES (2016) as follows:

The integral training of university students should result in graduates with a solid political development from the foundations of the Ideology of the Cuban Revolution; endowed with a broad scientific, ethical, legal, humanistic, economic and environmental culture; committed and prepared to defend the socialist Homeland and the just causes of humanity with their own arguments, and competent for professional performance and the exercise of a virtuous citizenship. These elements, linked together, constitute a complex system whose main result is its capacity to contribute, in a creative way, to find solutions to practical problems. (p. 9).

These political, legal and normative appreciations on the concept of integral training can be enriched, in one way or another, by the scientific literature of the authors consulted, both from the educational and medical sciences and stomatology, which demonstrate the need and interest in training an integral professional. See a general summary of ideas and concepts that confirms the above, based on coincidences between the referenced authors:

The integral training of the student contemplates a group of aspects (or dimensions) of the personality, according to the specialty and the context: physical-sports, moral, political-ideological, patriotic, labor, aesthetic, communicative, scientific, environmental, economic, legal, technological, informational, health, urbanity, coexistence, managerial-administrative, social inclusion (Capote Fernández et al., 2014; García Castro et al., 2018).

The integral training of students involves the acquisition of information (information that the person knows, understands, handles and uses); the development of capacities (intellectual, especially language), physical or motor skills, research skills, group work systems and procedures; habits, attitudes, and values; plus the incorporation and coexistence in society to live in an attentive, intelligent, reasonable, responsible and loving manner (Bauza Díaz et al., 2020; Aguilar Cantón et al., 2021).

The integral training of university students is a somewhat complex process with transversal dimensions which make up a specific social fabric and whose integration elements require harmonization and improvement. Therefore, they contribute to the education of social values, motives, attitudes, aptitudes, civility, authenticity, among others, that need to be concretized and adjusted in each context of action for an efficient, ethical, responsible and committed professional performance with society (Santiesteban Puerta et al., 2021; Concepción Cuétara et al., 2021).

Integral training requires educational scenarios, especially the classroom, that constitute participatory spaces of emotional manifestation and disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, flexible, that promote autonomy, teamwork and social commitment (Daza Acosta et al., 2019; Ramos Acevedo et al., 2020).

Integral training in the era of digitalization and informatization requires students to acquire skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable them to apply self-learning strategies which include the use of new technologies and connectivity with the available media; so that they have an active role and greater responsibility for their learning in the process (Matos López and Massip Acosta, 2020; Hernández Álvarez et al., 2021).

Conclusion

The knowledge analyzed reveals that integral training is approached as a human right and a duty of all those who interact in the formation of the individual; and, in particular, the role of the educational institution is recognized by considering it from

a double perception: conception of the formative process and result of the quality of education.

In the most general sense, integral training as a paradigm, from the pedagogical point of view, manifests the relationship between the instructive, educational and developmental. The instructive is associated with intelligence and is associated with the appropriation of part of the accumulated culture; the knowledge of a branch of human knowledge, its profession; the repeated use of the logic of scientific activity, of work activity; the ability to solve problems in everyday life. The educational is circumscribed to ethical values, to the emotions and feelings of the individual as a social being. And the development is framed in the faculties or functional potentialities, both cognitive, spiritual, volitional, social and physical, so that the students can transform themselves and their environment.

Although there are few scientific studies concerning the professional training process of the Stomatology student, an optimistic and orienting panorama is revealed where knowledge converges from the political, legal, normative, scientific and other university careers perspectives, which help to channel the theoretical bases of the integral training in the Stomatology career.

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Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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