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Defining specialised expertise in dental education

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Abstract

Dental education is a broad, multifaceted, and interdisciplinary scholarly field encompassing including curriculum design, teaching and learning, assessment, leadership, programme evaluation, and educational research. However, the definition of expertise in dental education remains ambiguous. In many settings, individuals are recognised as “dental education experts” or “dental educationists” primarily based on teaching experience and educational contributions, sometimes without formal academic preparation in education. While experience provides valuable practical insights, it may not fully equip dental educators with the theoretical and methodological foundations required for contemporary educational practice. This paper reflects on the evolving nature of dental education and argues that expertise should be understood more broadly than teaching experience alone. It highlights the key domains that require specialised knowledge in education. Drawing on developments in medical and health professions education, this paper emphasises the growing role of academic qualifications in education to support educational competence and leadership in dental education. While experience remains indispensable, this paper emphasises formal postgraduate academic preparation as an important foundation for specialised expertise in dental education, complemented by continued educational practice, scholarship, faculty development, and institutional support. © The Author(s) 2026.

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Curriculum; Dental education; Faculty development; Leadership; Teaching

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