

Systematic literature review on the research problem in dissertations on hospital class between 2011-2021¹

Revisão sistemática de literatura acerca do problema de pesquisa em dissertações sobre classe hospitalar entre 2011-2021

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Abstract

The main objective of this research was to understand the construction of the problem as a central element of research on hospital classes. As a methodology, we opted for a systematic review of the literature of dissertations produced between the years 2011-2021, located in the Brazilian Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses (BDTD). The following descriptors were used: "hospital class", "hospital pedagogy", "hospitalized student", "mobile school" and "hospital school". The sample consisted of 37 dissertations submitted to a systematic literature review with the aim of problematizing the motivations related to the formulation of the problem of these investigations. Among the main results, there was a predominance of the axes "teacher training" and "legislation/public policies", reflecting the growing awareness about the need to adequately train professionals through teaching in the hospital environment, as well as advancing research on the processes of implementation of the hospital class as a fundamental right to be guaranteed to hospitalized students.

Keywords: hospital class; dissertations; systematic review; research problem.

Resumo

O principal objetivo desta pesquisa consistiu em compreender a construção do problema como elemento central da pesquisa sobre classe hospitalar. Como metodologia, optou-se por uma revisão sistemática da literatura de dissertações produzidas entre os anos 2011-2021, localizadas na Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Dissertações e Teses (BDTD). Foram utilizados os seguintes descritores: "classe hospitalar", "pedagogia hospitalar", "aluno hospitalizado", "escola móvel" e "escola hospitalar". A amostra consistiu em 37 dissertações submetidas a uma revisão sistemática da literatura com o objetivo problematizar as motivações relativas à formulação do problema destas investigações. Dentre os principais resultados, verificou-se predominância dos eixos "formação de professores" e "legislação/políticas públicas" refletindo a crescente conscientização sobre a necessidade de capacitar adequadamente os profissionais pelo ensino no ambiente hospitalar, bem como avançar na pesquisa sobre os processos de implementação da classe hospitalar enquanto direito fundamental a ser assegurado ao aluno hospitalizado.

Palavras-chave: classe hospitalar; dissertações; revisão sistemática; problema de pesquisa.

INTRODUCTION

The main objective of this article is to understand the construction of the research problem as a central element in studies on hospital classrooms.

The chosen methodology was a systematic literature review, encompassing master's dissertations and doctoral theses produced between 2011 and 2021, retrieved from the

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Ethics committee approval: The research is documentary and did not go through an ethics committee.

Data availability: The data and materials used in this work are available in the National Bank of Dissertations and Theses (BDTD).

Study conducted at Universidade Estadual de Goiás (UEG), Anápolis, GO, Brasil.



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Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD). The following descriptors were used: "hospital classroom", "hospital pedagogy", "hospitalized student", "mobile school", and "hospital school." A total of 51 works were selected, comprising 43 master's dissertations and 8 doctoral theses.

The survey revealed a significant increase in academic production on the subject when compared to the previous decade (2000-2010), during which only 19 works were identified—13 dissertations and 6 theses. However, this investigation focuses exclusively on the analysis of the research problem in master's dissertations produced between 2011 and 2021, with the theses reserved for a subsequent study.

The analysis of the selected works followed the levels outlined below: a) Independent variable: research problem; b) Dependent variables: b1) title; b2) objectives (general and specific); b3) results and final considerations. The primary focus was placed on level "a", given the significance of the meanings and motivations that contributed to the formulation of the research problem. The remaining aspects were analyzed as supporting elements in understanding the problem.

Of the 41 dissertations initially identified, 37 comprised the corpus of this study. The remaining works were excluded either due to technical issues with servers or because they were, upon further verification, doctoral theses, which will be examined in a second phase of the research. The chronological distribution of the 37 dissertations analyzed is presented below.

Table 1 presents the distribution of research conducted between 2011 and 2021. Comparing the first three years of the decade (2011-2013) with the last three (2019-2021), a significant decrease in production on this topic can be observed, with 14 dissertations in the first triennium versus only four in the latter, indicating a decline in research interest. However, it is important to consider the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which began in December 2019 in Wuhan, China, and may be directly related to the sharp reduction observed in the final triennium.

Regarding the regional and institutional distribution of the research, Table 2 and Chart 1 present the institutions and their regional presence, highlighting those that most frequently address the topic. Of the total studies, the Southeast region ranks first (38%), followed by the Northeast (30%), Central-West (16%), South (13%), and North (3%).

Among these regions, the North stands out for the low relevance attributed to the subject, with only one dissertation addressing the theme. In the other regions, a notable presence is observed in the Southeast and Northeast, which together account for 68% of the sample, equivalent to 25 dissertations. The Central-West and South regions each had five dissertations, representing 13% of the sample per region.

Table 1. Chronological distribution of dissertations on Hospital Classrooms.

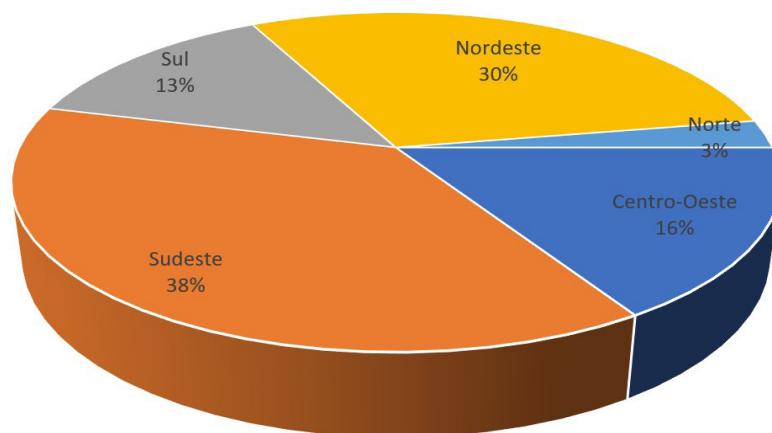
Year	Number of Works
2011	4
2012	5
2013	5
2014	2
2015	2
2016	6
2017	4
2018	4
2019	2
2020	1
2021	1

Source: Prepared by the author.

Table 2. Institutional Distribution of Dissertations by Regions of the Country.

Qty.	Institution	City	Region	Total
2	UFMT	Cuiabá	Centro-Oeste	5
2	UFG	Goiânia	Midwest	
1	PUC/GO	Goiânia		
3	UFSCAR	São Carlos	Sudeste	14
3	UFES	Espírito Santo	Southeast	
1	UNIFESP	Guarulhos		
1	UFTM	Minas Gerais		
1	UFJF	Juiz de Fora/MG		
2	USP	São Paulo		
1	USP	Ribeirão Preto/SP		
1	FIOCRUZ	Rio de Janeiro		
1	PUC/SP	São Paulo		
3	UFSM	Santa Maria	Sul	5
1	UEPG	Ponta Grossa/PR	South	
1	UNIOESTE	Cascavel/PR		
5	UFBA	Bahia	Nordeste	11
1	PUC/PE	Pernambuco	Northeast	
1	UFRP	Recife/PE		
1	UFS	Sergipe		
3	UFRN	Natal/RN		
1	UFPA	Belém/PA	Norte	1
			North	

Source: Author's elaboration.



■ Centro-Oeste ■ Sudeste ■ Sul ■ Nordeste ■ Norte

Chart 1. Regional distribution of dissertations (2011-2021).

Source: Author's elaboration.

Table 2 displays the institutions distributed by region in the country, while Chart 1 illustrates the percentage distribution of these studies across the different regions of Brazil.

METHODOLOGY

This investigation consisted of a systematic literature review aimed at analyzing the formulation of the research problem in studies on hospital class between 2011 and 2021. Out of the 43 dissertations located within this period, 37 were analyzed, while 6 studies were excluded due to access issues, such as download problems, websites being offline, and corrupted files, among others. The research was collected from the Brazilian Digital Library of Dissertations and Theses (BDTD), using the following descriptors: "hospital class", "hospital pedagogy", "hospitalized student", "mobile school", and "hospital school". In total, 51 works were selected, comprising 43 dissertations and 8 theses. In this investigation, we analyzed and systematized the data related to the dissertations, leaving the theses for a second publication.

In this approach, we conducted an analysis by identifying, selecting, and critically examining all available evidence. After a preliminary reading of each dissertation, we highlighted the research problem and its connections to the title and final results. The choice of the database as the primary source was justified by the comprehensive nature of the platform and the relevance of the academic works to the study in question. This descriptive investigation aimed to understand the various motivations involved in the formulation of the research problem. To this end, we adopted a documentary research procedure, including the analysis of documents—in this case, the dissertations available in the BDTD. The documents were selected based on predefined criteria related to the theme of hospital class, especially focusing on the formulation of the research problem.

A PROBLEMATIC APPROACH TO THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Upon noticing the absence of a well-structured problem—often replaced by multiple questions whose directions lead to diverse meanings—the impression one gets is that the theme, by itself, seems to justify the research investment, relegating the problem to a merely procedural role. These considerations, of course, do not imply that every research with multiple questions cannot have a clearly defined problem as its background (and vice versa). However, there are indications that the multiplicity of questions tends to favor the theme at the expense of the problem.

The fact that, in some studies, the problem does not appear to be the starting point but rather the theme itself and, consequently, the purpose of the investigation, is due to several factors. Among them, a key factor is the entry of students into already established research lines, where the problem becomes merely a procedural step, as the student becomes part of an already established debate on the subject. Additionally, the inherent difficulty in formulating the problem can also be attributed to the superficial way in which research methodology "manuals" usually present the components of an academic work, without delving into fundamental theoretical discussions about science. This limitation contrasts with the need for a careful and in-depth reading of seminal texts in the theory of knowledge, which would allow for a better understanding of the potential inherent in the research problem. The extensive bibliography available on the subject, pressured by the pragmatism imposed by the productivity logic of science, has prioritized technical approaches at the expense of theoretical depth, relegating essential authors for the epistemology of science—such as Gaston Bachelard, Thomas Kuhn, Karl Popper, Paul Feyerabend, Alan Chalmers, Steven French, Bruno Latour, and Jean-Paul Sartre—among others. What is perceived in these manuals is an euphemization of the notion of the problem, as if it were just a procedural step in the research process, without greater relevance. However, this minimization arises precisely from the fact that the formulation of the problem is the most original dimension of the investigation, requiring creativity, critical reflection, and the subjective engagement of the researcher—elements that escape the normative and systematic explanations of manuals.

The researcher's experience—whether in relation to their affinity with the object of study and specific interests, or their lived experience and specialized reading in the field—forms the fertile

ground for the emergence of the research problem. Dense and systematic reading in the area of investigation, in addition to being fundamental in the stage following theme selection, is an indispensable condition for formulating the problem. It is an essential intellectual exercise, both for the development of the research and for the initiation of new researchers.

Once its centrality is demonstrated, the issue of the research problem transcends the merely technical and formal view found in scientific writing manuals and methodology literature. It is not just another stage to be fulfilled by the researcher, but rather the capacity to elaborate what essentially constitutes the very idea of science. The objectivity and precision expected in the formulation of the problem do not result from a mechanical procedure but from the synthesis of different dimensions that permeate the researcher's trajectory: their life experience, reading, intuition, and creativity.

If we delve further into the issue of the research problem, we will see that both the objectives and the delimitation of the object are subsequent stages to its formulation. According to Volpato (2013, p. 14), "[...] research begins with a question and... there are questions that do not require hypotheses, and others that invariably depend on them".

According to Marconi and Lakatos (2010), for the problem to be valid as the trigger for the research, it must meet the following criteria: Can the problem be stated as a question? Does it correspond to personal (capacity), social, and scientific interests, that is, content and methodological interests? Are these interests harmonized? Is the problem at hand scientific, that is, do at least two variables relate to each other? Can it be the subject of systematic, controlled, and critical investigation? Can it be empirically verified in its consequences? (Schrader *apud* Marconi; Lakatos 2010, p. 20). These criteria are fundamental to understanding scientific activity in its social condition, that is, as the construction of knowledge carried out by what is referred to as the "scientific community", and which, according to Kuhn (1998), can either favor the "cleaning" process of a given paradigm or establish its rupture and promote what the philosopher called a "scientific revolution."

THE PROBLEM IN DISSERTATIONS ON HOSPITAL CLASS

We divided the data by establishing a relationship between the titles of the investigations and their respective research problems. The sample was divided into two stages: the first covers the period from 2011 to 2015, and the second, from 2016 to 2021. The organization of the data follows the chronological order of the works.

One initial observation relates to the variation in the formulation of the problem: while some investigations present a single problem, others adopt a format based on multiple triggering questions. In these cases, the organization by categories allows for an opening to different thematic axes within the same set of questions.

The research reveals that seven dissertations structure their research problems around multiple questions, while 11 are based on a single problem question. This distinction suggests that research with a problem formulated through a single statement tends to provide a clearer and more structured investigative path for the young researcher. On the other hand, when the investigation is based on multiple questions, the objectives may not be as well delineated. This may indicate that the formulation of the problem is still in a preliminary stage, a pre-reflective moment that precedes the construction of a more mature and defined question.

From the relationships between the title and the formulation of the problem, thematic axes emerge where the objects of these investigations are anchored. Chart 2 presents the main thematic axes where the research problems are anchored.

We observe that the thematic axes "Legislation/Public Policies" and "Teacher Training" constitute the main areas of investigation in this field, each appearing in ten dissertations. This finding suggests that, as the hospital class is a relatively recent phenomenon — its initial milestone being the National Policy on Special Education (Brasil, 1994), which guarantees the right to educational services for hospitalized children and adolescents and has since advanced through various decrees and resolutions — a significant portion of the research is dedicated to examining the processes of implementation and the challenges inherent to

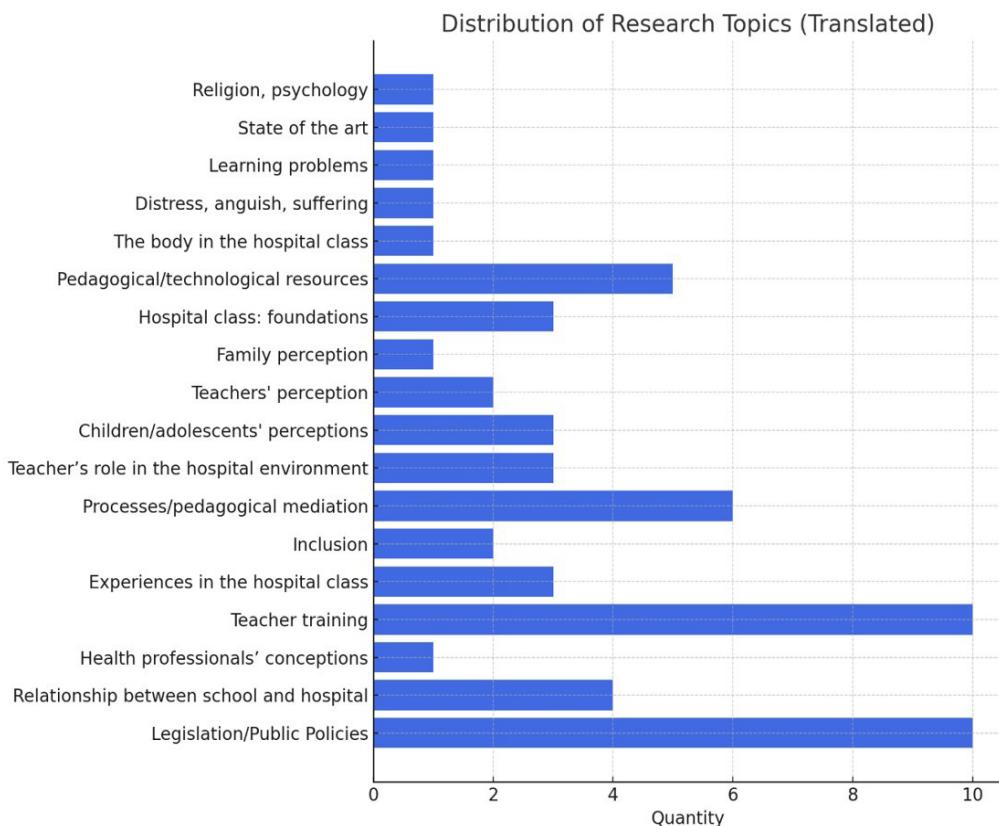


Chart 2. Thematic Axes/Frequency in Dissertations.

Source: Author's elaboration.

this educational modality. Among the dissertations analyzed, this central concern appears in 10 out of 37 studies, representing 27% of the sample, approximately one third of the total.

Another concern of equal relevance is related to teacher training, which often serves as the background for problem formulation. Here, too, we observe that 27% of the studies address this theme. Taken together, these two thematic axes account for 54% of the dissertations — more than half of the sample — focusing on the following central aspects: (a) legislation/public policies and (b) teacher training. In relation to the latter, it is important to highlight that, as this is a field of practice distinct from traditional teacher education, it becomes essential to investigate the limitations of such training and the challenges posed by the intersection between education and healthcare. From this perspective, teacher training reveals the need for an interdisciplinary approach in teacher education programs, in order to meet the demands of contemporary society.

As a complementary category to teacher training, the axis "Pedagogical Processes/Mediation" emerges as the third most prominent area of research interest. Among the 37 dissertations analyzed, this theme appears in six studies, corresponding to 16.21% of the sample.

The axis "Relationship Between Regular School and Hospital" also stands out, being the central topic in five dissertations, which represents 13.5% of the sample. This data reflects a fundamental concern with the articulation between the fields of education and healthcare, highlighting both the challenges and possibilities of providing specialized educational support within the hospital environment. Other recurring thematic axes include "Pedagogical/Technological Resources", "Perceptions of Children/Adolescents", and "Teacher's Role in the Hospital Environment", each addressed in four dissertations, equivalent to 10.81% of the sample. Regarding pedagogical resources, the studies emphasize the impact of technological innovations on teaching practices within hospital settings. For example, some dissertations investigate how the use of technologies, such as tablets, can contribute to the literacy process of hospitalized children. As illustrated by the following research questions:

a) *Do mobile devices (tablets) enable the digital literacy of children and adolescents undergoing cancer treatment?*

- b) *How can technological resources be integrated into teaching and learning methodologies for hospitalized children and adolescents at the University Hospital of Santa Maria?*
- c) *Why is the presence of a teacher in a hospital classroom important, and how does the teaching-learning process take place using ICTs?*
- d) *What are the potentials of distance learning environments in supporting the educational process of students in the final stage of high school with vulnerable health conditions?*

The interest in the contribution of technologies in the hospital classroom reveals their positive role as tools capable of improving pedagogical conditions in this setting. However, it is also evident that, even when the thematic focus is on technologies, the research problems are often presented in a decontextualized or superficial manner, suggesting a predominance of the theme over the actual research problem — a phenomenon we might call “false self-sufficiency”, whose outcome is the mere fulfillment of an ideological function.

Thematic axes identified in two investigations were “hospital class: foundations”; “teachers’ perceptions”; “inclusion”; and “experiences/lived experiences in the hospital class”, each representing 5.4% of the total. The other thematic axes, each present in only one dissertation, were: “religion, psychology”; “state of the art”; “learning difficulties”; “discomfort, anguish, suffering”; “the body in the hospital class”; “family’s perception”; and “health professionals’ conceptions”, each corresponding to 2.7%. It is worth emphasizing the thematic plasticity of the various aspects and objects raised within the broad field of the hospital class. As an interdisciplinary field, the objects and motivations tend to oscillate between the domains of education and health. As an example, it is noteworthy that, although there is a significant difference between the axes “Teacher Education” and “Learning Difficulties”, there is a shared concern with how the school model can be adapted to the singular reality of the hospital class and its interdisciplinary nature.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study aimed to systematize and analyze the research problems addressed in 37 Brazilian master’s dissertations on hospital classes, covering the period from 2011 to 2021. Among the most frequently addressed topics, teacher education and aspects of legislation and public policy stand out, in addition to a wide range of issues that highlight the importance of ensuring access to education for hospitalized children and adolescents. Other recurring themes include the role of teachers, teaching strategies tailored to the specific needs of hospitalized students, and the integration of hospital classes into the regular education system.

In general, the dissertations explored the challenges faced by professionals in hospital education, such as the lack of resources, the need for specialized training, and the difficulties in communication and coordination between medical and educational teams.

The predominance of the thematic axis “teacher education” as a recurring topic in the dissertations reflects a growing awareness of the need for specific training to teach in hospital settings. Teacher preparation is crucial to ensure that these professionals are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to meet the unique needs of hospitalized students, considering the particularities of each treatment. The dissertations addressing this theme mainly explore issues related to the adaptation of methodologies and pedagogical strategies to the hospital context.

Understanding the legislation and public policies related to education in hospital settings proves to be essential both for ensuring the educational rights of patients and for advocating for adequate resources for the implementation of this educational modality. However, many of the analyzed investigations show that the research problems are not always formulated with sufficient depth, which compromises a critical exploration of the legal frameworks and institutional policies that underpin hospital classes as an educational right.

Finally, a significant relationship was observed between the research lines of Graduate Programs and the motivations guiding the formulation of research problems. This aspect may explain why some research problems take on an appearance of “self-evidence,” as if merely presenting the theme were sufficient to make it evident in itself, thus dispensing with a more elaborate theoretical and methodological deepening in its formulation.

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Authors contribution

FLQ: Collection, systematization, and interpretation of data; complete writing of the article.

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