Administrative skills for dealing with issues facing contemporary pediatric dentistry programs

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A program director's role is multifaceted and characterized by variety, brevity and fragmentation. Our task is to create an organizational effort that is larger than its individual parts. An analogy would be the conductor of an orchestra, who through effort and leadership, coordinates individual efforts, which by themselves are so much noise, into music. Administrative abilities required to achieve these goals are categorized into decisional roles (time management, planning, resource allocation, negotiator, entrepreneur and financial manager), interpersonal roles (such as leadership, motivation and personnel administration), and informational roles (i.e. educator, program monitor and spokesperson). It is not surprising that we often feel as though we change hats every ten minutes. The work is varied and includes many nonroutine tasks, requires good communication skills as well as the ability to lead, organize, prioritize and delegate.

It is no longer enough to be a good teacher; the truly successful academician must also be a businessman. In an article titled, "The Decline of the Golden Age: Revolutionary Change in Modern Dental Education", (Journal of Dental Education, December, 1995), John DiBiaggio stated that we are witnessing the end of the golden age of American higher education. DiBiaggio says we must "find a new way to do business. Period." The purpose of this paper is to review some of the principles mentioned above that are important for the successful administration of a postdoctoral pediatric dental program.

Program success begins with an organized approach to the stated mission along with proper planning. The mission statement provides a common understanding of the organization's purpose and is used in establishing departmental goals. From this, strategies are developed as are the policies and programs required to accomplish the strategies. In order to operationalize the mission and goals of the program, one must begin with planning. Those who are constantly confronted with one crisis after another have neglected to plan beyond the day's events. Studies have found that middle managers have only twelve undisturbed intervals of twenty minutes during each month. Such fragmentation of activities makes it difficult to accomplish much. We all have heard the old saying that "time is money." Since one of our major resources is time, we must be sure to allocate it carefully. Thus, planning begins with time management.

Time management begins with an inventory of various duties of the job. By definition, routine tasks are the relatively minor daily duties that have little direct contribution to the program, such as answering the telephone, reviewing the mail and talking with people. Supervisory duties are the day-to-day tasks that are more directly related to program goals and are the ones essential for success. Such duties include teaching, curriculum development, personnel administration, and recruitment, to name a few. Special duties are not directly related to the department, such as committee work or special projects related to faculty development. The innovative aspects of the job are those most often neglected. However, time spent on creative thinking and long range planning is critical for program improvement. Authorities on time management suggest that approximately 65% of one's time should be spent on supervisory duties, around 15% on special tasks and approximately 10% on routine and innovative duties. If one does not plan carefully, routine and special duties have a way of crowding out the time needed for supervisory and innovative duties. Common time wasters include lack of priorities, too much time on the telephone, too much time visiting with people, procrastination, meetings and inability to delegate. An administrator who is able to prioritize and delegate effectively will gain time for more important matters. Others who cannot will handle each problem in the order it happens, "putting out fires", and not pay attention to the matters that truly deserve attention. Effective time utilization requires discipline and planning and is crucial for program success.

Innovative time spent on planning is critical and involves being a visionary, deciphering today's trends and translating them into future goals, determining society's needs, the future role of healthcare and shaping a program that will meet these future needs. Goals must be determined not only for the postdoctoral program, but for each individual resident and staff mem-

ber and with consideration of the goals of the department, the dental school, the university, and healthcare as a whole. Establishing goals, objectives, policies and procedures and determining what should be done in the future are important aspects of long term planning. This process provides a road map to be followed in accomplishing the mission. Planning considerations include: leadership style and motivational approach, curriculum issues, resident recruitment, human resource allocation (faculty, resident, assistants and staff), fiscal responsibility, research activities, scheduling and employee development. Without some idea of where it is you want to be, how will you ever know if you have arrived? The program director must establish the goals and then must set up the hierarchy to meet these goals, including the establishment of an authority hierarchy. The 10% of time spent with creative thinking will, according to experts, pay large dividends in the future.

Time management is especially difficult because not only is the program director responsible for residents, office staff, clinic staff and their interrelations with faculty - but must also take care of their own personal goals for success. Balancing the academic aspects of education, research and service is extremely difficult considering the director's heavy administrative responsibilities. We all recognize the need for self development and understand its importance in maintaining our expertise and leadership position. It is also important to continue to challenge ourselves not only for promotion and tenure purposes but for the personal satisfaction received in a job well done. To do so requires scheduling our own faculty development time or it too will be crowded out.

After planning, nothing is more important for program success than leadership. Leadership skills are not something people are born with, rather they are learned behavior. The ability to influence the opinions, attitudes, and behavior of others and the ability to obtain the group's willingness to follow, a willingness based upon commonly shared goals, is key for contemporary academicians. Successful leaders are individuals who are: adaptable to situations; ambitious and goal orientated; assertive, decisive and dependable; dominant, energetic and persistent; as well as self confident, able to handle stress and willing to assume responsibility. Such individuals tend to be intelligent, creative, diplomatic but powerful, organized, knowledgeable, persuasive and socially skilled. These human skills allow one to lead, motivate, manage conflict and encourage teamwork among the group. As one moves up the organizational hierarchy, the previous importance on technical knowledge decreases, and directors must then rely more on the technical skills of others. Top administrators must not only be creative thinkers with the ability to analyze events and perceive trends but must also possess the interpersonal skills mentioned above.

Leadership styles are as varied as are the people in leadership positions. Several guidelines are available for classifying leadership styles. One is based on the degree of subordinate participation in the decision making process. With the autocratic approach, leaders solve the problem and make the decision unilaterally using information available to them at the time. They may not tell their subordinates what the problems are while obtaining information from them and do not seek alternative solutions from the group. At the other end of the continuum is the participative approach where leaders share a problem with their group and together they generate alternatives in an attempt to reach a consensus on a solution. In this approach, the leader does not try to influence the group and is willing to accept the group's solution.

A second manner of analyzing leadership style is based on the leader's concern for production as compared with the concern for people. Some administrators believe that by taking care of the human relations needs of the group and by encouraging a friendly, happy work environment, the work will somehow get done. The antithesis of this is the individual whose primary concern is productivity and who emphasizes efficiency through authority and arranges the work in such a way to make sure that human elements do not interfere. There are various combinations of the above, but it is the team management approach that emphasizes both the human elements and the productivity issues. With this approach, the leader is concerned about the very best for his people and wants them to grow and develop in the organization. The team approach is, according to research by Blake and Mouton, the best way to manage and the one most positively associated with high productivity, success and satisfaction.

A program director must also be skilled in human resource management. He or she must select staff, residents and faculty who will be motivated to achieve program goals with little supervision. Selecting quality residents is an important aspect of program success. Although the interview process is an important exchange between the applicant and the program, the manner by which the leader interacts with the group may more significantly impact on the recruiting process. Much like a coach, program directors act as a mentor and role model. The program director's aim is to create a climate which is conducive to satisfaction but at the same time achieves the departmental mission. These internal marketing strategies are the most important in the recruitment process. Candidates have been shown to be positively influenced by a number of factors that include the group's warmth and enthusiasm with the candidate, the leader's speaking ability and the leader's reputation and knowledge. Programs do a number of things to attract applicants, such as use of a promotional brochure, by offering summer employment, or by speaking at various campuses, but none is more important than the morale within the group.

Once assembled, the program director must also direct the group, assign tasks, manage conflict and most importantly, motivate. Often people talk in terms of giving a worker a "shot" of motivation. Unfortunately

it is not an easy injection. Motivation is a inner drive or impulse that comes from a person's desire to behave in a certain way. Psychologists have studied behavior and have found that people are motivated by certain well defined, predictable needs. In the 1950s Abraham Maslow formulated the concept of a hierarchy of human needs and has described how these five human needs relate to motivation (Steers and Porter: Motivation and Work Behavior, 4th ed., McGraw-Hill, 1987). Lower level needs are the physiological or biological needs such as food, shelter, rest and so forth. Safety or security needs are next in the hierarchy. People want to feel safe and secure about their future and thus employers provide medical insurance and retirement plans. The employee's paycheck enables one to purchase necessities vital for survival thereby fulfilling these lower level needs. According to Maslow, once a need is satisfied, it will no longer be a motivator for positive behavior. The need to belong, to be loved and accepted is the third on the hierarchy. People have a need for attention or acceptance by a group of their peers. Positive group motivation can be a powerful influence for achieving individual performance. Everyone also has the need for recognition, achievement, status and a sense of accomplishment. Esteem is fourth along the hierarchy and it is important for leaders to find ways to satisfy the need for self respect, especially for jobs with little opportunity for personal satisfaction. Self realization or self-fulfillment is the highest order need which most people would like to have satisfied. These needs are not realized until people reach their full potential. Maslow's need hierarchy is a continuum that assumes that people are motivated to satisfy needs that are important at a particular time in their lives. His theory hypothesizes that in order to motivate someone, you need to understand where that person currently is on the hierarchy and focus on satisfying those needs.

In 1960, Douglas McGregor wrote a book entitled, "The Human Side of Enterprise" (Robbins: Basic Motivation Concepts, 4th ed., Prentice-Hall, 1989). He noted that individuals' approaches to motivation were usually related to their own attitude about people, their needs and their motivations. He identified extremes in attitudes and classified them as Theory X and Theory Y. Leaders who are Theory X orientated have a limited view of employees' capabilities and motivation. This supervisor feels people have an inherent dislike of work and will avoid it if they can and thus believes most employees will have to be coerced, controlled, or threatened in order to be productive. He also feels that the average human prefers to be directed, avoids responsibility and has little ambition. Theory X supervisors believe that the key to employee motivation is in approaches that satisfy lower level needs of people. Although one may accomplish a job faster with this view, close supervision is required and, since there is little opportunity for personal growth, morale and motivation among the group may suffer.

Theory Y supervisors have a much higher opinion of employees and feel, with the proper approach, the staff will accomplish worthwhile objectives. This type of leader sees employees as individuals who seek responsibility, are highly imaginative and creative and who function based on the associated rewards for their achievement. The advantage of Theory Y is that workers are given responsibility and encouraged to offer their ideas and thus satisfy higher level needs. However, this management style is time consuming and more effort must be put into training and staff development in order to attain personal satisfaction. Why is motivation important? A basic management principle states that individual performance is based on ability and motivation. The formula (performance = ability x motivation) states that no task can be performed successfully unless the person who is to carry it out possesses the ability and motivation to do so. Thus, for individual effort to be greater than the sum of the parts, one must be an effective motivator.

As referenced earlier, John DiBiaggio says we are witnessing the end of the golden age of American higher education and quotes Clark Kerr, former chairman of the Carnegie Council on Higher Education, who states that higher education "must do both new things and old things better...It must manage to be dynamic without so much addition and multiplication, and it must learn to subtract and divide creatively." Recent history indicates that this axiom applies to dental education. Six dental schools have closed in the past ten years and many more have dramatically altered the manner in which they operate. The reason for this is evident in the Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, "Dental Education at the Crossroads: Challenges and Change". Dental school funding from state and federal sources has progressively declined and additional revenue from increased enrollment and tuition is limited. This explains why 87% of dental school deans felt that overall financing of their school was their most immediate concern. Thus a future environment of fiscal austerity mandates that successful academicians must, as DiBiaggio suggests, "find a new way to do business" while still balancing the education-patient service teeter-totter.

Douglas and Fein recently reported trends in dental school revenue sources over a 19 year period ending in 1991 (Journal of Dental Education, January, 1995). Results indicate that during that interval: 1) total state support for dental education remained essentially level since 1979, 2) federal support declined by more than 50%, 3) student tuition nearly doubled, and 4) clinic revenue also more than doubled. It was noted that changes experienced by public schools were different from those of private schools. State support, in constant dollars, steadily declined for private schools while remaining relatively constant for public schools. The state proportion of the total budget, however, de-

creased for both private and state schools. A similar trend occurred with federal revenue for dental education. Dramatic differences are evident with regard to tuition. Tuition represents only 11% of public school revenue as compared to almost 50% for private schools, which have had to markedly increase tuition in order to cover operating expenses. It is anticipated that such fiscal austerity will continue to impact on all aspects of dental education, including postdoctoral pediatric dentistry.

Various options are available to enhance revenue for the school, department and ultimately the program. Pediatric dental residency positions are included in the federal funding of graduate medical education. As such, many programs have been able to directly benefit through their service activities in teaching hospitals. Hospital activities, such as emergency and operating room activity, are other means that we all use to enhance program revenue. Funding from service activity at a community health center is also an activity that blends the service and educational components of our mission. This particular patient pool is one with tremendous dental need and provides a unique clinical experience for students who rotate at such a facility. Patient service revenue continues to be the most commonly mentioned way for dental schools to increase revenue and is one that postdoctoral pediatric dentistry has been successful at for some time. In the IOM report, one dean found that while his advanced education students accounted for only 10% of school enrollment, they generated 45% of clinic revenue. Since the average dental school's expenses exceed income by $785,000, it would seem that the concept of enhancing patient care revenue should be explored.

Postdoctoral pediatric dental programs have generally employed a service philosophy instead of the typical dental school orientation where patients were there only to serve the educational process and the amount of clinic income produced by each student was unimportant. As resident stipends increase, programs must find additional nontraditional ways to accommodate funding shortfalls. An era of fiscal accountability has resulted in a steady decline of state support for dental education. We must now not only enhance patient service revenue but must compete to retain the patient populations necessary for our educational programs and the revenue needed to support our other missions. In fact, three of the recommendations in the IOM report relate to the importance of patient service activities for revenue enhancement. The IOM's view on patient care is that "dental schools have no ethical or practical alternative but to make their programs more attentive to patients as well as more economically viable and to develop the programs and the data needed to assess and document the quality and efficiency of care" (Journal of Dental Education, January, 1995). In order to do that, we must be as conscious as the private practitioner of the patient's needs, preferences and motivations. The Commission on Dental Accreditation also states that we must ensure that adequate numbers of patients are available for students to obtain clinical competency.

Patient service and education are not necessarily mutually exclusive terms. To move into the future, we must achieve the proper balance of success in the areas of education, (both didactic and clinical), research (both clinical and basic science), as well as, patient service activities. This will help diversify our financial base in order to ensure survival in an ever changing educational environment. This is, needless to say, not an easy task. If we attempt to maintain the status quo in dental education, we are sure to see stagnation and decline. To move into the future eventually involves change. Resistance to change is one of the most baffling problems we face in that habits die hard and fear of the unknown makes most people anxious. To achieve success, the planning part of the organizational process must address the change process as well as an outcomes assessment. This ensures that changes are being evaluated and allows corrective action in case one fails to achieve the planned objectives. It is important for leaders to plan for the future and reassess their missions of education, research and patient care in order to be a contributing member of the educational community. As DiBiaggio says " if we are to have any hope of survival, we must find a new way to do business." Today's climate requires that we not only be academicians, but successful businesspeople.

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