

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Training in nursing and care for people with disabilities: curricular analysis in the Brazilian context

HIGHLIGHTS

1. Content gaps regarding nursing assistance to people with disabilities.
2. Low incidence of mandatory subjects on the topic.
3. Predominance of fragmented content.
4. Fragmentation may compromise the inclusive training of future professionals.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To analyze the landscape of the inclusion of content related to nursing assistance to people with disabilities in the Pedagogical Projects of nursing courses at Brazilian federal universities. **Method:** Documentary research, qualitative in nature, which analyzed the Pedagogical Projects of 45 courses, between January and March 2025. It was developed in three stages: identification of higher education public institutions with nursing degrees; search for the Pedagogical Projects on the institutions' websites or hubs; analysis of the content related to nursing care for people with disabilities. **Results:** Only 11 courses have components focused on assistance to people with disabilities, with a predominance of elective or transversal subjects. The content addresses relevant topics, but inadequate terms still persist in the description of some components. **Conclusion:** Gaps were evidenced in the inclusion of specific content aimed at nursing assistance to people with disabilities, with low incidence of mandatory subjects on the topic.

DESCRIPTORS: Universities; Education, Nursing, Diploma Programs; Education, Nursing; Curriculum; Health of the Disabled.

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INTRODUCTION

The change in morbidity and mortality patterns and the increasing aging population have highlighted new perspectives for nursing care. In this context, the generalist training of the Nurse needs adaptations so that the population's needs can be met and the comprehensiveness of care is promoted¹.

Although progress has been observed in the topics addressed, there remains a need to incorporate issues related to care in situations of service to populations with specific health conditions, which require communication, attitudinal, and practical knowledge approaches adapted to their needs, such as People with Disabilities².

These individuals have specific health needs that, for the most part, are not fully met. From this perspective, a scope review study identified that there are different barriers impacting access to health services, highlighting difficulties in communication with professionals, as well as behavioral and attitudinal aspects³.

Such obstacles, which compromise the quality of health services aimed at this population, may be related to the academic training of health professionals. This can be observed in a study that pointed out reports of insecurity and difficulties in serving this clientele, especially mentioning the absence of specific content on the subject in mandatory subjects during the course⁴.

However, there is an effort to integrate inclusive guidelines into academic curricula. In Brazil, the National Health Policy for People with Disabilities, combined with the proposal of the new National Curriculum Guidelines (NCGs) for nursing courses, establishes principles for training professionals capable of working with this population at all levels of health care in an inclusive and resolute manner⁵.

The relevance of these guidelines becomes even more evident in light of the latest Brazilian census data, which showed that 8.9% of the population reported having some type of disability, representing a total of 18.6 million people. Despite this significant number, some challenges persist regarding professional training and the implementation of inclusive care policies in the health sector.

In this context, this article proposes to analyze the landscape of the inclusion of content related to nursing care for People with Disabilities in the Pedagogical Projects of nursing courses at Brazilian federal universities.

METHOD

This is a documentary research, of a qualitative nature, conducted from January to March 2025, developed from the documentary analysis of the Pedagogical Projects of the Nursing Courses (PPC) of Brazilian federal universities. The PPCs were used as an official source for evaluating the programmatic content of the subjects that make up the curriculum matrix of undergraduate nursing courses.

The study was developed in three stages: 1) Identification of public higher education institutions with nursing degrees; 2) Search for the PPCs on the official websites of the institutions or the responsible centers; 3) Analysis of the content related to nursing care for people with disabilities in the syllabi of the subjects based on Bardin's content analysis⁶, which included the stages of Pre-analysis, material exploration, and result treatment.

In the first stage, searches were conducted on the website of the Ministry of Education (MEC) (<https://www.gov.br/mec/pt-br/assuntos/es/universidades-federais>) to identify Federal Universities and, subsequently, on the official websites of each educational institution, as a way to identify which universities had nursing courses. In this stage, all Brazilian federal universities listed by the MEC were considered in the search, and the analysis was conducted by geographic region. Thus, the tracking led to the selection of 45 courses for the composition of the study.

The second stage consisted of surveying the PPCs of the institutions that had nursing courses, selected in the previous stage. Those that were available in full for consultation on the websites of the respective federal institutions were included, and those whose link for access did not work or had redirection issues were disregarded.

In the third stage, a floating reading of the documents in full was carried out to identify subjects and content directed towards the care of Nursing for People with Disabilities (PwD) and to formulate the indicators to be considered for the data extraction instrument. As a result, a spreadsheet instrument was constructed for data extraction, which contained the collection of the following information: institution, state, region, year of publication of the PPC, curricular component, nature, workload, and content related to PwD. Based on this data, a reflective and critical analysis of the selected information for the study⁶ was conducted.

Furthermore, since this study was conducted with publicly accessible documents, approval from the Research Ethics Committee was not required, as stated in resolution no. 510/2016.

RESULTS

69 Brazilian Federal Universities were identified, of which 45 offer the Bachelor's degree in Nursing, distributed across all regions of the country. Chart 1 presents the relationship between the regions and the year of publication of the PPC of each institution.

Chart 1. List of Brazilian federal universities, region, and year of publication of the PPC. Redenção, CE, Brazil, 2025

(continue)

	Higher Education Institution	UF	Region	Year of Publication of the PPC
1	Universidade Federal do Acre (UFAC)	AC	North	2019
2	Universidade Federal do Amapá (UNIFAP)	AP	North	2012
3	Universidade Federal do Amazonas (UFAM)	AM	North	2019
4	Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA)	PA	North	2020
5	Fundação Universidade Federal de Rondônia (UNIR)	RO	North	2015
6	Universidade Federal de Roraima (UFRR)	RR	North	2022
7	Universidade Federal do Tocantins (UFT)	TO	North	2023
8	Universidade Federal de Alagoas (UFAL)	AL	Northeast	2007
9	Universidade Federal da Bahia (UFBA)	BA	Northeast	2010
10	Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB)	BA	Northeast	2018
11	Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC)	CE	Northeast	2023

Chart 1. List of Brazilian federal universities, region, and year of publication of the PPC. Redenção, CE, Brazil, 2025

(conclusion)

	Higher Education Institution	UF	Region	Year of Publication of the PPC
12	Universidade da Integração Internacional da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (Unilab)	CE	Northeast	2016
13	Universidade Federal do Maranhão (UFMA)	MA	Northeast	2015
14	Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB)	PB	Northeast	2007
15	Universidade Federal de Campina Grande (UFCG)	PB	Northeast	2011
16	Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE)	PE	Northeast	2013
17	Universidade Federal do Vale do São Francisco (UNIVASF)	PE	Northeast	2013
18	Universidade Federal do Piauí (UFPI)	PI	Northeast	2019
19	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN)	RN	Northeast	2018
20	Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS)	SE	Northeast	2024
21	University of Brasília (UnB)nB)	DF	Midwest	2017
22	Universidade Federal de Jataí (UFJ)	GO	Midwest	2024
23	Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG)	GO	Midwest	2013
24	Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso (UFMT)	MT	Midwest	2010
25	Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS)	MS	Midwest	2021
26	Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP)	SP	Southeast	2023
27	Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCar)	SP	Southeast	2015
28	Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ)	RJ	Southeast	2022
29	Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO)	RJ	Southeast	2012
30	Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU)	MG	Southeast	2018
31	Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM)	MG	Southeast	2018
32	Universidade Federal do Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM)	MG	Southeast	2024
33	Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei (UFSJ)	MG	Southeast	2022
34	Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV)	MG	Southeast	2022
35	Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF)	MG	Southeast	2020
36	Universidade Federal de Alfenas (Unifal)	MG	Southeast	2022
37	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG)	MG	Southeast	2017
38	Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR)	PR	South	2015
39	Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS)	PR	South	2010
40	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS)	RS	South	2022
41	Universidade Federal do Rio Grande (FURG)	RS	South	2023
42	Universidade Federal de Ciências da Saúde de Porto Alegre (UFCSPA)	RS	South	2024
43	Universidade Federal do Pampa (Unipampa)	RS	South	2023
44	Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM)	RS	South	2024
45	Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC)	SC	South	2018

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Most of the institutions included belong to the Northeast Region, with 13 (28.89%) universities, followed by the Southeast Region with 12 (26.67%). The other regions,

Midwest, North, and South, have fewer universities offering a Bachelor's degree in Nursing, with five (11.11%), seven (15.56%), and eight (17.78%) respectively.

Regarding the PPCs, the year of their publications varies between 2007 and 2024. The oldest document belongs to UFAL, located in the Northeast Region. While the most current ones, published in 2024, belong to institutions from different regions: UFS in the Northeast Region; UFJ in the Midwest Region; UFTM in the Southeast Region; UFCSPA and UFSM from the South Region.

After reading the documents in full, the names of the curricular components with their respective syllabi addressing care for people with disabilities were extracted. Chart 2 presents the relationship of these components with their nature, workload, and main contents.

Chart 2. Relationship of curricular components and contents related to Nursing care for People with Disabilities in Brazil. Redenção, CE, Brazil, 2025

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Institution/ Year of PPC publication	Curricular Component	Nature	Workload	Contents related to Nursing care for People with Disabilities
UFMT/2010 ⁷	Libras applied to health	Elective	64h	Technical vocabulary in health; emergency dialogues; health area guidelines and nursing.
	Care for people with special needs	Elective	32h	Care for deaf people. Care for blind people. Care for people with motor disabilities. Care for people with mental disabilities.
UFRR/2022 ⁸	Adult and Elderly Health: clinical aspects	Mandatory	120h	Nursing care for the person and family in the context of chronic conditions: reduced mobility and disabilities/rehabilitation: auditory, visual, and motor;
UFJ/2025 ⁹	Sexual and reproductive health of adults and the elderly	Elective	32h	Sexual and reproductive health of people with disabilities.
	Libras I (Health Area)	Elective	64h	Basic notions of Libras (Brazilian Sign Language) in the context specific to the health area.
UFMG/2017 ¹⁰	Nursing in Primary Care	Mandatory	105h	Nursing actions for the promotion of individual and collective health of different social segments, including minorities, people with disabilities, or those with reduced mobility.
Unifal/2022 ¹¹	Child and Adolescent Health I	Mandatory	120h	Children with special needs
UFJF/2020 ¹²	Psychology and Special Educational Needs I and II	Elective	60h	Contextualization of Special and Inclusive Education, focusing on sensory, intellectual, and physical disabilities, as well as cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities. Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Chart 2. Relationship of curricular components and contents related to Nursing care for People with Disabilities in Brazil. Redenção, CE, Brazil, 2025

(conclusion)

Institution/ Year of PPC publication	Curricular Component	Nature	Workload	Contents related to Nursing care for People with Disabilities
Unipampa/ 2023 ¹³	Public Health III: Health care	Mandatory	225h	Health care for children, adolescents, women, men, the elderly, and people with disabilities.
UFS/2024 ¹⁴	Nursing in Child and Adolescent Health I	Mandatory	30h	Nursing Care in the prevention and treatment of prevalent diseases in childhood, children with disabilities, and/or vulnerable situations.
UFRN/2018 ¹⁵	Nursing in the care of children with disabilities	Elective	60h	Theory of child development; National Policy for the Care of People with Disabilities; Global Developmental Disorders; Genetic and neurological syndromes; Autism Spectrum Disorder; The family and the community in the care of children with disabilities; Networks for the Care of People with Disabilities; Systematization of nursing assistance for children with disabilities in reference health services.
Unilab/2016 ¹⁶	Policies and knowledge in family health	Mandatory	45h	Health care policies for people with disabilities.
UFC/2023 ¹⁷	Person with Disability: An Interdisciplinary Health Issue	Elective	32h	Concept of a person with a disability; characterization and approach to sensory disabilities (visual and auditory) and physical disability; health indicators for people with disabilities; public policies and legislation for people with disabilities in Brazil; physical and sensory accessibility of persons with disabilities to health services; health assessment of persons with disabilities; health care for persons with disabilities in health services.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

After analyzing the PPCs, it was identified that 11 (24.44%) undergraduate Nursing courses have some curricular component with content aimed at caring for people with disabilities. In total, 13 subjects were found, of which six (46.15%) are mandatory, six (46.15%) elective, and one optional (7.69%), with a workload ranging from 32 to 225 hours.

The mandatory subjects address broader themes, such as Policies and knowledge in family health, Nursing in Primary Care, and Collective Health III: Health care, in which content about people with disabilities appears in a transversal and punctual manner. In contrast, the elective and optional subjects, such as Libras applied to health, Nursing in the care of children with disabilities, and Person with Disability: An Interdisciplinary

Health Issue, have a specific focus on the target audience and their relationship with health.

The content covers important themes about nursing care directed at people with disabilities, with the main ones observed being: technical vocabulary in health within the scope of Libras; care for adults with sensory, physical, and intellectual disabilities; sexual and reproductive health; care for children with disabilities with an emphasis on Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD); as well as the guidelines of the National Policy for the Care of Persons with Disabilities. However, the presence of terms such as people with disabilities and people with special needs can be observed in the description of some curricular components.

DISCUSSION

The analysis revealed that the PPCs of undergraduate Nursing courses at Brazilian Federal Universities seek to expand care practices in all aspects of human development, addressing content that integrates essential aspects for resolute and evidence-based assistance in various scenarios, considering the inherent singularities of each region in which they are located.

However, regarding nursing assistance to people with disabilities, gaps are still observed in the inclusion of curricular components that address themes and techniques aimed at the comprehensiveness of actions offered to the public, as of the 45 institutions that were part of the analysis, only 11 included subjects and topics related to the community, which represents only an approximate percentage of 25% of the courses.

However, this lack can be justified by the inclusion of the topic Person with Disability in Nursing education only in 2021 with the enactment of the NCG, which introduced the need to integrate issues related to the population at different levels of health care, so that professionals acquire cultural competence and critical thinking for care⁵. Of the 45 projects evaluated in the first stage, 16 (35.6%) were published after the establishment of this NCG. Of these, only six (13.3%) included subjects or themes in their plans.

Overall, the evaluation highlighted the prevalence of offering the subject of Libras by most courses; however, for the study in question, only the subjects that addressed the specificities of nursing assistance to people with hearing disabilities were considered, such as the subject of Libras applied to health (UFMT-Rondonópolis) and Libras I-Health Area (UFJ), which address, in addition to introductory aspects, content that contributes to communication in the health area with the deaf.

It is emphasized that the importance of teaching Libras is undeniable, both in terms of introductory aspects and the specificities related to the health area. However, a study that evaluated the relevance of the in-person Libras subject in the nursing undergraduate course, which focused on general and conversational aspects, when asked if they considered that the knowledge acquired in the classes was sufficient for providing care to deaf patients, 142 of the 268 undergraduates who participated responded with partially agree, do not agree, neither agree nor disagree, partially disagree, and totally disagree, which highlights the need to incorporate other strategies¹⁸.

Moreover, the inclusion of topics related to people with disabilities in subjects with a workload equal to or greater than 100 hours was configured as more prevalent in the evaluated projects. However, an average of 4,000 hours would allow for the inclusion of specific subjects on the theme, without compromising the general training process,

enabling inclusive training so that future nurses can ensure comprehensive care for people with disabilities across different life cycles¹⁹.

It is worth noting that fragmented content in subjects with extensive and relevant themes for the training of nurses such as: Nursing in Basic Care and Collective Health III: Health care raises the reflection on whether these subjects have the importance recognized by students and teachers in the explanation and approach and whether the assigned workload is sufficient to cover the theme in its entirety.

Regarding the specific subjects in the area, advances are observed in the scope of the themes addressed; however, most are optional or elective. However, the inclusion of specific themes only in elective subjects directly interferes with the acquisition of knowledge by students, who tend to enroll only in subjects in their areas of interest, which can hinder the implementation of strategies that favor the improvement of clinical practices in the context of people with disabilities²⁰.

Despite the advances, terms used to refer to people with disabilities that have been out of use since 1993 were still observed, such as: People with disabilities and 2009 People with special needs, requiring updates to the PPCs to ensure inclusion based on current legislation²¹. The use of the correct term ensures the understanding that disability is not the whole but rather a part of the lives of people with disabilities and that this advancement comes from the achievements of the struggles for rights and social inclusion.

The findings of this study provide contributions to the field of Nursing by highlighting the need to strengthen professional training focused on the care of people with disabilities. By identifying gaps in the approach to the theme in the curricula of undergraduate courses, the study will allow for the reformulation of pedagogical and structural practices that ensure the preparation of future nurses to act in front of the public. In addition, the results can support the formulation of educational policies and guidelines that encourage the inclusion of content and practices aimed at accessibility, inclusive communication, and comprehensive care.

CONCLUSION

It is considered that, based on the analysis of the Pedagogical Projects of the Nursing Courses of Brazilian Federal Universities conducted in this study, it was evident that there are still visible gaps regarding the inclusion of specific content aimed at nursing assistance to people with disabilities. Furthermore, there was a low incidence of mandatory subjects on the topic, associated with the predominance of fragmented or optionally offered content, which may compromise the comprehensive and inclusive training of future professionals in this aspect and directly impact the care of people with disabilities. The recent inclusion of the topic in the National Curriculum Guidelines of 2021 partially explains this scenario, but also reinforces the need for review and updating of the PPCs to ensure a more structured, critical, and effective approach to the theme.

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