

PERCEPTION OF TEACHERS ABOUT THE LEARNING PROCESS IN NURSING ADMINISTRATION

Cristiano Caveião¹, Ivete Palmira Sanson Zagonel², Izabel Cristina Meister Coelho³,
Aida Maris Peres⁴, Juliana Helena Montezeli⁵

¹RN. M.Sc. in Biotechnology. Faculdades Integradas do Brasil/Faculdade Pequeno Príncipe. Curitiba-PR-Brazil.

²RN. Ph.D. in Nursing. Faculty at Faculdade Pequeno Príncipe. Curitiba-PR- Brazil.

³MD. Ph. D. in Surgical Clinics. Faculty at Faculdade Pequeno Príncipe. Curitiba-PR- Brazil.

⁴RN. Ph.D. in Nursing. Faculty at Universidade Federal do Paraná. Curitiba-PR- Brazil.

⁵RN. M.Sc. in Nursing. Faculty at Universidade Estadual de Londrina. Londrina-PR- Brazil.

ABSTRACT: This study aimed to identify the Nursing Administration learning process in daily education from the perspective of faculty members teaching this subject. Exploratory and descriptive study with a qualitative approach, undertaken between July and September 2012, involving faculty members from five private and six public higher education institutions in the South of Brazil. The content analysis of 25 faculty members' interviews revealed two categories: learning process in daily Nursing Administration education and assessment of the Nursing Administration learning process. The results indicate that compartmentalized curricula continue to exist, that the course lacks diverse practical scenario and specific teacher training, while the use of active strategies/methods appears. The study formulates recommendations for the teaching institutions and the faculty members in order to improve the actions in the Nursing Administration learning process.

DESCRIPTORS: Nursing administration research; Higher education; Faculty Nursing; Nursing faculty practice.

PERCEÇÃO DE DOCENTES SOBRE O PROCESSO DE APRENDIZADO EM ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE ENFERMAGEM

RESUMO: Este estudo objetivou identificar o processo de aprendizado de Administração em Enfermagem no cotidiano de formação, na perspectiva de docentes dessa disciplina. Estudo exploratório-descritivo com abordagem qualitativa, realizado entre julho e setembro de 2012, com docentes de cinco Instituições de Ensino Superior, privadas e seis públicas do sul do Brasil. A análise de conteúdo das entrevistas de 25 docentes permitiu a emergência de duas categorias: processo de aprendizado no cotidiano de formação de Administração em Enfermagem e avaliação do processo de aprendizado de Administração em Enfermagem. Os resultados indicam que persistem currículos compartimentalizados, os cursos carecem de diversificação de cenários de prática e formação docente específica, aparece a utilização de estratégias/metodologias ativas. Indica recomendações às instituições de ensino e aos docentes para a melhoria das ações no processo de aprendizado em Administração em Enfermagem.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Pesquisa em administração de enfermagem; Educação superior; Docentes de enfermagem; Prática do docente de enfermagem.

PERCEPCIÓN DE DOCENTES SOBRE EL PROCESO DE APRENDIZAJE EN ADMINISTRACIÓN DE ENFERMERÍA

RESUMEN: Este estudio tuvo el objetivo de identificar el proceso de aprendizaje de Administración en Enfermería en el cotidiano de formación, en la perspectiva de docentes de esa disciplina. Estudio exploratorio descriptivo con abordaje cualitativo, realizado entre julio y setiembre de 2012, con docentes de cinco Instituciones de Enseñanza Superior, particulares, y seis públicas del sur de Brasil. El análisis de contenido de las entrevistas de 25 docentes resultó en dos categorías: proceso de aprendizaje en el cotidiano de formación de Administración en Enfermería y evaluación del proceso de aprendizaje de Administración en Enfermería. Los resultados apuntan que persisten currículos compartimentalizados, los cursos necesitan de diversificación de escenarios de práctica y formación docente específica, aparece la utilización de estrategias/metodologías activas. Son necesarias recomendaciones a las instituciones de enseñanza y a los docentes para mejorar acciones en el proceso de aprendizaje en Administración en Enfermería.

DESCRIPTORIOS: Investigación en administración de enfermería; Educación superior; Docentes de enfermería; Práctica del docente de enfermería.

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Corresponding author:

Cristiano Caveião
Faculdades Integradas do Brasil/Faculdade Pequeno Príncipe.
Rua Osório dos Santos Pacheco, 675 - 81110-180 - Curitiba-PR-Brazil
E-mail: cristiano_caveiao@hotmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

In the age of information, the faculty member's knowledge sphere makes room for that of the mediating and problematizing role of learning: (s)he started to be considered as the person who challenges the students, showing them, among the different learning possibilities, possible routes. The institutions' traditional form of teaching was centered on the faculty member, who was treated as the 'owner of the knowledge'. The context is changing, as the learning process involves teaching and learning and the mechanisms through which the students and faculty members reach it. The learning process is the ability to adapt, modify and improve the behavior and reactions, with faculty members serving as the essential element to mediate the teaching and learning trajectory⁽¹⁾.

This process implies multiple, mutually linked factors and which, although they can be analyzed separately, are part of a whole whose nature and quality depend on a series of conditions internal and external to the subject. It derives from the subject's assimilation of the knowledge and the modification of existing mental structures⁽²⁾. The learning process is personal and involves the construction and sharing of past experiences that influence the future learning.

Teaching methods exist, but no learning method, as learning cannot be circumscribed to the limits of a class, the hearing of a conference, the reading of a book⁽¹⁾.

When relating these considerations to nursing, in the course of the nursing administration learning process, knowledge needs to be addressed about the theoretical conceptions that permeate health management, human resource training in this profession and decision making to achieve the desired results. This knowledge is part of the National Curricular Guidelines (NCGs) for Undergraduate Nursing Programs⁽³⁾ with a view to future nurses' functioning in the Unified Health System (SUS).

For the learning process, particularly in nursing administration, to accomplish its transformative potential, a new focus is required, new technical-pedagogical trends, changes in the educational strategies with a view to an emancipating education, precisely because it favors the reflection on the daily, the questioning and social modification. This gives rise to deeper discussions

at the higher education institutions (HEI) about the possibility to implement innovative learning processes. These discussions can modify the education of human resources in health for the SUS in terms of regional particularities⁽⁴⁾.

Nevertheless, it is important for the stakeholders in this context to be constantly heard with a view to investigating the benefits, effectiveness and needs for improvement of these new practices. Thus, against this background, the objective in this study is to identify the Nursing Administration learning process in daily education from the perspective of faculty members teaching this subject.

METHOD

Exploratory and descriptive study with a qualitative approach, as this permitted further approximation with the research subjects' daily reality and experiences⁽⁵⁾. The study was undertaken at five private and six public HEI in the State of Paraná whose Nursing Undergraduate program has received official recognition from the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). Forty faculty members engaged in the subject Nursing Administration were invited to participate, 25 of whom accepted, 10 from private and 15 from public institutions.

The ethical premises complied with National Health Council Resolution 196/96⁽⁶⁾ and the data were collected after the Ethics Committee for Research involving Human Beings had approved the research project under registration number 1067/12. To safeguard the participants' anonymity, the following codes were used for their identification: Public Institution – Pub 1, Pub 2, Pub 3...; Private Institution – Priv 1, Priv 2, Priv 3...

The following inclusion criteria were adopted: faculty in the subject Nursing Administration (or similar designation) and being affiliated with a private or public HEI offering a course with MEC recognition. Faculty members teaching other subjects and who were on vacation or medical leave during the research period were excluded.

To collect the information, a semistructured interview was recorded between July and September 2012, based on the guiding question: how do you, as a faculty member teaching Nursing Administration at a higher education institution,

perceive the learning process of this subject in daily education? To analyze the information, the steps of content analysis were followed, which includes: 1. Pre-analysis; 2. Exploration of the material; 3. Treatment of the results obtained, inference and interpretation⁽⁷⁾.

RESULTS

The qualitative analysis revealed two categories with the following names: A. Learning process in daily Nursing Administration education and B. Assessment of the Nursing Administration learning process.

Learning process in daily Nursing Administration education

The learning process articulates the roles of teacher and student, in which the faculty member serves as a mediator, helping the student to analyze the information sources with the best evidence on a given fact or topic. This process centers its attention no longer on the information transmission function, but on the mediation of knowledge, using different methodological and assessment strategies.

Strategies of the Teaching-Learning Process

Among the teaching-learning strategies in daily Nursing Administration education, the participants mention the methodological strategies, which aim to incorporate trends that drive the transformation. The following testimony reveals the movement established through new methods, breaking with the traditional model that implies the Cartesian rationalism, towards an open model with distinct scenarios and freedom to diversify.

More dynamic teaching-learning methods, a more reflexive method, also attempting to include classes that are not so much lectures, but within a perspective of a more problematizing education. (Pub 9)

The faculty members refer to the use of dialogued lectures articulated with other strategies, such as the solution of problems or situations, case studies, VG-OG (Verbalization

Group and Observation Group), simulations, seminars, distance education platform and multimedia visual resources, as exemplified in the following excerpts:

I use dialogued lectures, discussion of situations, VG-OG, case simulation, seminars, thinking of the students as co-participants in their education process. (Priv 1)

We also use a lot of simulation because, this thing of learning to do things, everybody learns, whether you have to repeat it ten times, he'll learn. (Priv 4)

The use of articles was present in the faculty members' daily reality, creating possibilities not only to gain specific knowledge on the administration subject, but to start contact with research, evidence-based practice, techniques that will contribute to future professional practice. Teaching with research is a strategy used successfully, as it activates the curiosity, the critical spirit to read and analyze articles published and to establish the links with the learning process:

I also use the new articles published a lot, so the student already works with that, discovers, also creates and constructs a very palpable, concrete knowledge, but with solid theoretical foundations. (Pub 10)

The technical visits were mentioned as valuable opportunities to learn Nursing Administration. The experience of daily practice helps to learn how to do things, as the students gain direct contact with the nurses' responsibilities in the management of the care process and of health institutions, in accordance with the following statement:

We made technical visits to some interesting services. That has always been fundamental for the student to get to know different realities and particularities of the nurse's role in each of them. (Pub 3)

The participating faculty members list the dynamics and videos to address themes like motivation, leadership and even for the

students to relax. Group Dynamics advocate an interactive, dialogical and constructive view of the stakeholders in the teaching and learning process, as one of the faculty members highlights:

Some dynamics, some videos, when I am going to discuss, for example, motivation, leadership in the context of administration. (Pub 2)

The faculty members have used planning as a way to engage the students, to enable them to put in practice situations they will face in their future professional practice, always in accordance with the contents needed for that skill. The planning mentioned was strategic-situational, strategic-participatory and hypothetical planning to arouse the students' interest and strategic thinking in the experience of this strategy, according to the following statement:

I work with planning, I use different thought currents of planning, ranging from the strategic-situational to strategic-participatory planning, epidemiology in planning and actual planning in nursing. (Pub 11)

Learning Opportunities

As observed, the faculty members indicated the theoretical hour load, practice/supervised training of the subject Nursing Administration, predominant in the final course year, which was divided between primary care (Primary Health Care Services) and Tertiary Care (Hospitals). Other services should be highlighted where the nurses work, such as home care, pre-hospital care, sectors like the operating room and the material and sterilization center. As regards the theoretical contents, the hour load ranges between 36 and 168 hours and, for the practical classes, between 30 and 144 hours. The main learning opportunity, during the supervised curricular training, ranges between 270 and 900 hours.

The main activities listed that offer 'Learning Opportunities' to the students during practical training are related to the competencies recommended in the NCGs. Besides the knowledge opportunities in different contexts related to administrative matters, care management and health service management are predominant. These include

the problematization of reality, identification of problems and establishment of intervention actions, involving knowledge of the population's profile, human resources available at the services and continuing education. They mention the experience of direct patient care interrelated with the management knowledge, considering the Systemization of Nursing Care (SNC) as a care management technology, besides the use of quality tools, leadership models, waste management, work scale, service organization, labor laws, among others, as mentioned in these excerpts:

The focus we tend to adopt in the practical classes and training is for the student to try and apply teamwork, communication, decision making. And thus understand management as a work tool for nurses and not as an end, it is a work means, a way for the nurses to develop their work. (Pub 1)

This training is divided in two branches: one is care management and the other is service management. Hence, in one situation, I am the teacher who is accompanying this inside the hospital and there will be another teacher to accompany this in the network. (Pub 3)

The students can verify the nurse's role as a supervisor, always trying not to dissociate it from patient care. They can dimension the staff according to the proposal of COFEN. Permit the observation of the use of quality tools, show leadership models, waste management, work scale, service organization, material forecasts and provisions. (Priv 10)

Assessment of the Nursing Administration Learning Process

The teachers highlight different assessment methods, including the use of integrated seminars and integrative assessments that consider learning in the context of other than specific administration knowledge.

Assessment of Actions in the Practice Field

The participants have used instruments to systemize and standardize the assessment in the training area, in the distinct hospital or primary

care scenarios, as follows:

For the practical part, there is an instrument for the faculty, in hospital health and in collective health, who use it, with the students having to comply with certain steps in each part. (Pub 6)

The faculty members in this study mention assessment instruments based on knowledge, skills and attitudes the student needs to develop during the training or practical classes. They highlight that competency-based assessment permits demonstrating whether the student achieved the competences the subject proposed or not. The faculty members and practical nurse supervisors perform this assessment, based on a script that addresses the competences that need to be gained. The student's formative and continuing assessment in the actual work environment is one of the main instruments the faculty members have at their disposal. Its development is articulated among the stakeholders, faculty members, field nurses and the students themselves through self-assessment, as follows:

In the practical part, periodical assessments take place through an instrument. All competences, skills and attitudes the future nurse needs are described. The faculty member and the nurse who supervises the training field perform this assessment. (Priv 8)

The training has an instrument to guide the assessment, some topics, some knowledge, skills, attitudes the students are supposed to achieve, what they are expected to develop or learn in the course of the training. (Pub 9)

The use of the portfolio is highlighted in the statements, an organized and properly planned collection of activities the student produces within a given period. Its goal is to evidence the different components of his development and trajectory, which stimulates reflexive thinking, facilitating opportunities to document, register the procedures and learning itself.

An instrument is provided that contains different questions with management activities, the portfolio, proposed to accomplish during the training. (Priv 8)

Portfolio, which includes the situations experienced during the training and the reflections the teachers stimulate. (Priv 9)

Assessment of Contents/Theoretical Axes

The contents/theoretical axes are assessed through written tests, using questions that require reflection, seminars, works and participation in the classroom. Formative and summative assessments are undertaken. It is important to highlight the use of integrated seminars, allowing the student to integrative previous and disciplinary knowledge:

Tests, seminars, individual and group activities in class. (Priv 10)

The assessment also takes place within an active educational perspective, the assessment is formative and also summative, so there are times for theoretical assessments. (Priv 1)

The case study is mentioned as an assessment technique, besides directed studies, reports, presence and participation in class, group discussion/dynamics, elaboration of a scientific article, elaboration of projects to simulate the solution of situations and management proposals. The association through integrative assessment at the end of the term is mentioned, combining the subjects taught in the term under analysis.

So, there are the case studies we raise to allow them to problematize what each of them would do in a given situation. (Priv 4)

In the theoretical part, through directed studies, presence and participation in the classroom as well as a final test. (Pub 9)

DISCUSSION

Problematization is a teaching model committed to liberating education, which values dialogue, demystifies reality and stimulates social transformation through an awareness-raising and critical practice. In this case, the problems studied

demand a real scenario, so that knowledge construction takes place based on significant experiences⁽⁸⁾. The teachers' discourse reveals the use of active methods, which does not mean that they are developing innovative teaching, but some techniques.

The simulations are protected spaces that reproduce scenarios of health care practice. The students deliver care to simulated patients, practice procedures on manikins and/or puppets and are followed by a facilitating teacher who assesses the performance of the skills focused on the future professional's profile⁽⁹⁾. These simulations favor the teaching-learning process, as they demonstrate situations to the students which they can experience in an environment where they can make mistakes.

In addition, they have the opportunity to know and verify, through practical classes, the functioning of companies – the job world -, as a way to reconsider the theoretical-methodological concepts and express the dialogue produced in the classroom⁽¹⁰⁾. The technical visits articulate the theoretical contributions with the practice and the market, motivating towards an effective teaching and learning process.

Despite experiencing leadership in the practical field, the students face difficulties to practice it in the hospital context, related to the limited emphasis on leadership teaching in their academic program⁽¹¹⁾. Therefore, the dynamics greatly contribute to overcome this obstacle.

Planning as a teaching strategy has favored the teaching and learning process, as it emerges from the context the students experience and signals to the nursing and clinical faculty what areas need investments for the purpose of problem solving⁽¹²⁾.

The range of methodological options the faculty members mention reveal concerns in the conception of the teaching-learning process, but changing the curriculum and methods does not guarantee the desired changes or pedagogical practices. It can only be affirmed that a curriculum has truly changes when the teachers have changed their practices and altered their conceptions of teaching-learning⁽¹³⁾.

In a study about the curriculum matrix, the hour load for the subject Nursing Administration was concentrated in the final course term, indicating shortages in the distribution and integration of the contents, causing a distance or

dichotomy between theory and practice⁽⁹⁾. The ideal model is to construct a curriculum in which the education process is privileged, articulated with the job world, which breaks with the theory/practice dichotomy through the use of innovative pedagogical strategies, offering contextualized teaching, granting significant learning and a future professional who is more critical and committed to professional and social issues⁽¹⁴⁾.

Based on the minimum hour load of 4000 hours for the nursing curriculum, 20 percent refers to the subject Supervised Training⁽¹⁵⁾. Hence, the variation in this research refers to the differences among the curricula of the HEI studied.

The faculty members have different instruments at their disposal to assess the students. In one study, a group of faculty mentions the construction of an instrument to assess the Curricular Training in Nursing Administration, which was aimed at minimizing the dichotomy between theory and practice. They conclude that it facilitated the student's assessment, based on a significant active teaching-learning method⁽¹⁶⁾.

The portfolio is used as a formative assessment method in the teaching and learning process of the subject Nursing Administration, constituting an assessment form that differs from the traditional. It promotes the development of critical-reflexive skills and, consequently, the construction of knowledge⁽¹⁷⁾.

The assessment techniques the faculty members mentioned are coherent with the related literature with regard to innovative teaching and learning methods. Among the assessment strategies, the seminar grants the students a more participatory and reflexive education model. It permits the awakening of different thought operations, such as: analysis, interpretation, criticism, raising hypotheses, search for suppositions, collection and organization of data⁽¹⁸⁾.

To permit a global assessment of the student, distinct learning assessment approaches are needed, including survey, data analysis and synthesis, both objective and subjectively, permitting the diagnosis of the factors that interfere in the learning outcomes⁽¹⁰⁾. The assessment strategies need to inform the students and faculty about the quality of the educational experience⁽¹⁹⁾. Hence, different assessment strategies can be used, provided that they allow the students to gain insights about their own education process.

Finally, it should be highlighted that, despite difficulties for the nursing management practice, imposed by the job world as well as the challenges deriving from the change in the pedagogical practice in the course of the academic training, a change movement is perceived, with a view to rooting the management competences these professionals need in a perspective that progressively takes distance from the anachronism of teaching as mere knowledge transmission and, consequently, from a non-critical practice⁽²⁰⁾.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research indicates that compartmentalized curricula continue to exist, despite emerging proposal to use active teaching strategies/methods. The learning opportunities show variations in the theoretical and practical hour load among the distinct curricula under investigation. Most curricula include the subject Nursing Administration in the final course year in different practical scenarios.

The practice is assessed by means of an instrument that is based on the knowledge, skills and attitudes the students need to develop during the training or practical classes. This instrument shows whether the students achieved the competences the subject proposed or not; articulates the faculty member and field nurse's assessment with the student's self-assessment. The faculty members mention the reflexive portfolio, which facilitates learning opportunities by documenting and registering the procedures and the students' learning.

To assess the contents/theoretical axes, different techniques are referred to, including integrated seminars, integrative assessments, written tests with questions that require reflection, works, participation in the classroom and the writing of papers.

The need is highlighted for the teachers and HEI to incorporate integrated teaching, which permits the learning of administration contents in different contexts and different complexity levels, based on planning.

It is considered that the research contributes to undergraduate nursing faculty, leading to reflections and deeper knowledge on the learning process of Nursing Administration. In

that sense, the following is recommended: 1) Cross-sectional redistribution of the contents across the curriculum, avoiding the students' insertion in the final course year only; 2) Renewed discussion of the theoretical and practical hour load; 3) Establishment of more divers practical scenarios, granting the students experiences at all complexity levels of human experience; 4) Implementation of innovative assessments with different approaches, based on the achievement of the competences suggested in the NCGs; 5) Implementation of (innovative/active) methodological strategies in the learning process; 6) Prioritizing the encouragement of questioning, doubt and uncertainty about the demands of the health-disease process and the work process of health professionals in the learning process; 7) Engagement of students as protagonists of the desired transformations in the learning process of Nursing Administration.

Far from solving the discussions about the theme, these considerations, although initial, can encourage further research and mainly trigger possible curricular changes in the undergraduate nursing programs, with a view to the education of nurses who are increasingly able to improve the scenarios they work in.

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