

## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

## PEDAGOGICAL TRENDS IN THESES AND DISSERTATIONS OF A RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY LABORATORY IN NURSING AND HEALTH EDUCATION (1994-2017)

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** To analyze pedagogical trends present in the scientific investigations conducted by the Research and Technology Laboratory in Nursing and Health Education of the Federal University of Santa Catarina.

**Method:** This was a qualitative documentary analysis of theses and dissertations produced in 1994-2017. The data were collected between March and May 2018. Content analysis was used to process the data.

**Results:** A total of 106 documents were analyzed. Of these, 89 were affiliated with the liberating/creative trend, 17 with the progressive trend, and no studies were found that were exclusively related to the conventional pedagogical trend.

**Conclusions:** The theses and dissertations produced by the Research Lab addressed nursing education on a perspective mostly based on the liberation/creative pedagogical trend. This study contributed to constructing knowledge by recognizing the pedagogical assumptions used by researchers in the field, essential for identifying the political positions of Brazilian nursing when conducting research

**DESCRIPTORS:** Nursing research; Research groups; Educational models; Nursing education; Nursing graduate education.


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## **EXPRESSÃO DAS TENDÊNCIAS PEDAGÓGICAS EM TESES E DISSERTAÇÕES DE UM LABORATÓRIO DE PESQUISA E TECNOLOGIA EM EDUCAÇÃO EM ENFERMAGEM E SAÚDE (1994-2017)**

### **RESUMO**

*Objetivo: analisar como as tendências pedagógicas se expressam nas investigações científicas do Laboratório de Pesquisa e Tecnologia em Educação em Enfermagem e Saúde, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina.*

*Método: pesquisa qualitativa, utilizando análise documental de teses e dissertações produzidas no período 1994-2017. A coleta dos dados ocorreu de março a maio de 2018. Dados tratados à luz da análise de conteúdo.*

*Resultados: identificaram-se 106 documentos. Destes, 89 se filiam à tendência libertadora/criativa, 17 se aproximam da tendência progressista e não foram evidenciados estudos exclusivamente relacionados à tendência pedagógica convencional.*

*Conclusões: as teses e dissertações do Laboratório de Pesquisa trabalharam a educação em enfermagem a partir de perspectiva pautada, majoritariamente, pela tendência pedagógica libertadora/criativa. Este estudo contribui para a construção do conhecimento na enfermagem por reconhecer os pressupostos pedagógicos utilizados por pesquisadores da área, essencial para identificar quais posicionamentos políticos a enfermagem brasileira assume em suas investigações científicas.*

**DESCRITORES:** Pesquisa em enfermagem; Grupos de pesquisa; Modelos educacionais; Educação em enfermagem; Educação de pós-graduação em enfermagem.

## **EXPRESIÓN DE TENDENCIAS PEDAGÓGICAS EN TESIS Y DISSERTACIONES DE LABORATORIO DE INVESTIGACIÓN Y TECNOLOGÍA EDUCATIVA EN ENFERMERÍA Y SALUD (1994-2017)**

### **RESUMEN:**

*Objetivo: Analizar la expresión de las tendencias pedagógicas en las investigaciones científicas del Laboratorio de Investigación y Tecnología en Educación en Enfermería y Salud, Universidad Federal de Santa Catarina.*

*Método: Investigación cualitativa, aplicando análisis documental de tesis y disertaciones producidas en el período 1994-2017. Datos recolectados entre marzo y mayo de 2018. Datos estudiados por análisis de contenido.*

*Resultados: Se identificaron 106 documentos. De ellos, 89 adoptan la tendencia liberadora/creativa, 17 se acercan a la tendencia progresista, y no hubo evidencia de estudios exclusivamente relacionados a la tendencia pedagógica convencional.*

*Conclusiones: Las tesis y disertaciones del Laboratorio de Investigación trabajaron la educación en enfermería a partir de una perspectiva establecida, mayoritariamente, por la tendencia liberadora/creativa. Este estudio contribuye a la construcción del conocimiento en enfermería, al reconocer los presupuestos pedagógicos utilizados por investigadores del área, esencial para identificar las posturas políticas que la enfermería brasileña asume en sus investigaciones científicas*

**DESCRIPTORES:** Investigación en Enfermería; Grupos de Investigación; Modelos Educativos; Educación en Enfermería; Educación de Posgrado en Enfermería.

## INTRODUCTION

Between the emergence of nursing research in the 1950s and the contemporary production of knowledge, the field of nursing has gradually become a more scientific and social practice. Ongoing search is conducted in an attempt to bring different types of knowledge production closer together, based on social health needs, and to consolidate scientific research as a political resource and an instrument to strengthen nursing in Brazil<sup>(1)</sup>.

In this context, graduate education considerably contributes to knowledge production in nursing, considering that over the last 20 years, significant coordination has occurred between the population's health/illness needs and academic education centers, connecting the research process to the Brazilian reality.

Within the scope of graduate school, research groups are a hegemonic space for knowledge production and training human resources for research, as it allows for the necessary theoretical depth, driving professionals to develop a critical and reflexive investigative stance<sup>(1)</sup>. Moreover, such groups are instruments that help strengthen the professional identity of nurses<sup>(2)</sup>. Thus, research practices in these spaces are based on the premise of scientific production as an activity that connects researchers at different levels of education, through related areas, with the goal of sharing ideas and addressing lines of research in a collective, integrated and systematic way<sup>(3)</sup>.

Specifically in the context of knowledge production in nursing education in Brazil, the Research and Technology Laboratory of Nursing and Health Education (EDEN) was created in 1992 and is part of the Nursing Graduate Program of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (PEN/UFSC). Its research is focused on the quality of nursing teaching and care, in an effort to understand issues relative to the act of teaching, teaching and learning processes, and agents of the educational process<sup>(4)</sup>.

Throughout its systematic journey of 25 years, the group's research has helped consolidate the production of knowledge about nursing education, with the basic goal of developing research, actions, and reflection in the field at the undergraduate, graduate and continuing education levels. Its actions bring together the various actors that are part of this context and use methodologies and technologies capable of perfecting learning processes<sup>(5)</sup>.

Furthermore, the construct of "education" takes on different definitions that are interwoven with the social, cultural, economic, and political practices of a given society and at a given time. Thus, nursing education follows suit, influenced by the educational practices in force at the time, which reveals the coexistence, also within knowledge production in nursing, of educational paradigms with different paradigms, which are based on pedagogical approaches, such as those known as conventional, progressive and/or liberation pedagogy.

A conventional pedagogical trend is defined as the educational process that aims for accommodation, with the goal of keeping social order, or the status quo. Meanwhile, the progressive trend aims to change people to meet social needs. Furthermore, the liberation trend is committed to social change, shining a light on injustices to change them.

Considering that knowledge production in nursing should dialogue with health demands<sup>(2-7)</sup>, it is essential to understand how the different pedagogical approaches manifest in research in the field. Furthermore, there is great interest in prioritizing studies about theoretical-methodological education frameworks in health<sup>(8)</sup>, training professionals for healthcare systems<sup>(9)</sup>, universal coverage<sup>(10)</sup>, and educational methodologies<sup>(11)</sup>.

Thus, the objective of the present study was to analyze how pedagogical trends manifest in the theses and dissertations produced by the EDEN/UFSC research group throughout its 25 years of existence. The time frame of 1994 to 2017 was chosen because these two years represent the oldest and the most recent scientific production, respectively, to be produced by the group and defended before the PEN/UFSC.

## METHOD

This was a descriptive and exploratory qualitative study carried out based on documentary analysis of theses and dissertations produced by EDEN/UFSC from 1994 to 2017. The documentary analysis consists of identifying, verifying and assessing documents relative to a given object, which allows researchers to learn about and become closer to a process, something that has been constituted and continues to be constituted over the history of people, groups, ideas and/or practices<sup>(12-13)</sup>.

The mapping of doctoral theses and master’s dissertations followed two steps: first, the authors consulted a list of theses and dissertations defended by members of the EDEN to the Graduate Nursing Program of the Federal University of Santa Catarina (PPGENF-UFSC); next, these documents were retrieved from the program’s webpage. The universe of studies consisted of 43 theses and 63 dissertations; the first dissertation was defended in 1994, the first thesis in 2000, and 2017 was the most recent year in which both a thesis and dissertation had been defended.

Data collection and analysis occurred in March, April, and May, 2018. To this end, the categories, abstracts, results, discussions and final considerations were read in full, and a dynamic reading was carried out of the rest of the publications. The collected data were inserted into a Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet and organized in terms of the nature of the research (thesis or dissertation), year of publication, title, PhD/Master’s candidate, advisor, general objectives, theoretical framework, research approach (qualitative, quantitative or quali-quantitative), methodology, central theme of the production and pedagogical trend, which could be liberation/creative, progressive or conventional. Figure 1 presents details about the main characteristics of each pedagogical trend.

	LIBERATION/CREATIVE	PROGRESSIVE	CONVENTIONAL
<b>Function</b>	Aims for transformation	Aims for reform	Aims for accommodation
<b>Consequences</b>	Change society to meet the needs of people.	Change people to meet the needs of society.	Prevent change, keep social order.
<b>Strategy</b>	Stand up to inequality, injustice and corruption.	Work to improve something without changing the unfair aspects of society.	Teaching people to accept and adapt to social situations without changing unfair aspects.
<b>Purpose</b>	Liberate, achieve social progress.	Pacify and calm society – especially those who protest.	Control society.
<b>Approach</b>	Humanitarian and democratic. Practices participation.	Paternalistic. Practices “kind” control.	Authoritarian. Practices strict control.
<b>Effect on community</b>	Supports—helps people take control of their health and lives.	Illusory – pretends to support but resists actual change.	Oppressive – strict and central authority, allows for little or no participation.
<b>How participants are perceived</b>	Essentially active. Capable of taking on responsibilities and being self-sufficient. Responsible when treated with respect and as equals.	Essentially irresponsible. They must be taken care of. When guided, they are capable of participating in some activities.	Essentially passive. Need to be domesticated. Empty vessels to be filled by standardized knowledge.
<b>Teaching method</b>	Open dialogue, where many answers emerge from the experience of people. Everybody is educated.	Teachers educate and keep students busy. There is dialogue and debate, but teachers decide the right answers.	Teachers catechize. Students ask some questions and study under pressure. Often boring.
<b>Mode of learning</b>	Active. Everybody contributes, learns by doing and debating.	More or less active. Memorizing still is essential.	Passive. Students receive knowledge and memorize it.
<b>Flow of ideas and knowledge</b>	Two-way: everybody has knowledge and is educated	Essentially one-way: sometimes two-way.	One-way: From those who know to those who do not know.
<b>Place of teaching</b>	Life itself.	Classroom and other controlled situations.	The classroom.
<b>Group interaction</b>	Cooperative. Students help each other. Those who are quicker help others. Simple and ongoing.	Organized and guided by the teacher. Games and techniques are used to unite the group.	Competitive. Cooperation among students during tests is considered cheating.
<b>Evaluation</b>	Conducted by the community, by students and by the school. Students and teachers assess one another’s work and attitudes.	Often exaggerated by “experts” in teaching or health. The community and students have limited participation.	Often superficial. Conducted by the school or health service. Students and the community are objects of study.

Figure 1 - Concepts that guide pedagogical practices in the teaching-learning process Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil, 2018. Source: LINO et al., 2011.

To fully show how pedagogical trends expressed themselves, text excerpts were used to demonstrate how they were related to the ideas presented in the studies. Theses were identified using T01, T02 (...) and dissertations, D01, D02 (...), followed by the year of publication.

The data were submitted to thematic content analysis for qualitative studies<sup>(14)</sup>. After analyzing the collected material, the data were grouped into tables and discussed using qualitative analysis.

As this was a documentary study, it did not have to be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee; however, necessary ethical precepts were followed for data analysis and dissemination.

## RESULTS

In all, 106 academic works were produced by EDEN (43 theses and 63 dissertations), under the advisory of five researchers over the group's 25 years of existence. There was stability regarding the advisors, as their mean time of permanence in the group was 13.2 years. The studies were mostly qualitative, but a few mixed-methods and quantitative studies were also present.

Regarding the objectives of the studies, 56 aimed to identify or define phenomena and meanings; 49 developed some type of intervention with the researched population; and one was dedicated specifically to reflexively analyzing the object of study.

The studies addressed topics such as health education, nursing education, continuing education, lifelong learning, popular education, curriculum, professional training, teacher training, online education, pedagogical practices and attitudes, teaching-learning processes, forms of knowledge production, educational assessment and the formation and development of research groups.

Regarding the theoretical frameworks adopted, most of the theses and dissertations used theories or theoretical legacies of renowned authors in the field of education and/or nursing to underpin discussions about their chosen themes. At least 38 different theoretical frameworks were used, with more emphasis to the principles derived from critical-reflexive pedagogy, the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, Lee Shulman's pedagogical content, and Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action.

Most of the studies explored their topic of interest from the perspective related to liberation/creative teaching. Other studies wove considerations based on the precepts of progressive education, and zero works presented interpretations exclusively based on conventional pedagogical trends, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 - Pedagogical Trends in Theses and Dissertations produced by the EDEN-UFSC Group Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil, 2019 (continues)

Period	Liberation/Critical		Progressive	
	Thesis	Dissertation	Thesis	Dissertation
1994 to 1998	-	8	-	1
1999 to 2003	2	13	1	5
2004 to 2008	9	9	2	0
2009 to 2013	9	15	1	2

2014 to 2017	18	6	1	4
Total	38	51	5	12

Source: the authors, 2019.

The content of most theses and dissertations showed that the researchers developed their investigations based on the concept of teaching-learning as a dynamic process, constantly under construction. Characteristics of the works produced by EDEN included: respect for the culture and knowledge of subjects, recognition of the importance of pedagogical relationships grounded in dialogue, understanding educational movements as hinged on social context and education as a strategy to encourage critical consciousness and consequent practice of freedom.

*By recognizing the value of knowledge that arises from the history of communities and the lives of individuals, educational and health actions encouraged them to establish a place in the world, breaking away from silence and from passive reception of models and prescriptions. (D04-1997)*

*We showed the importance of sharing knowledge through dialogue, which has the potential to transform reality. We emphasize that the task of intervening is implicated with the process of learning. Intervening for liberation, for the transformation of unfair life and health conditions. (T18-2011)*

The excerpts show that the studies adhered to the premises of the liberation/creative pedagogical trend. Dialogical practice and conception of the educational processes were understood as instruments for changing reality.

*If teachers provide this new way of intervening, the pedagogical relationship will be processed differently than normal, because neither her [teacher] nor the student will be mere executors/reproducers of tasks and norms, but critical thinkers who propose new possibilities in light of their reality. Thus, to educate critical-creative professionals, we must build life-in-act work action and management technologies for such pedagogical work, which causes noise, opens cracks and escape routes, in work processes, instituted not only in academic environments, which in themselves should be spaces for freedom. (T04- 2004)*

*Only when the liberation pedagogy is understood as a means capable of promoting a broader view of healthcare can we change Styles of Thinking in order to train capable critical-creative nurses to provide comprehensive care to others and themselves. (D44-2010)*

Furthermore, education is understood beyond the transmission of information and knowledge. There was synergy between the reflections presented in the studies and the liberation/creative trend, which are based on the principle that teachers, students, the community, and whoever else is involved in these movements can (and should) believe in education as a political act, based on which changes can be made to overcome the inequalities of society.

*To emerge from darkness it is necessary to become enlightened. Enlightenment means being aware of this darkness and based on this "critical consciousness", decide to leave it behind. One becomes human through the movement of being in the world, admiring it, reflecting about it and creating. This characteristic belongs only to humans and only humans can transform the world and themselves. (T21-2012)*

*And thus, even if health education clashes with irrational capitalist ideology and makes it so that in productive environments, it must still be grounded in technical and behavioral prescriptions to maintain worker health, experiences with critical health educational practices, with working women in textile environments, allow for a process of personal*

*reflection, even with the limitations conditioned by this work context. (T30 – 2015)*

In terms of the group of theses and dissertations that were closer to the progressive pedagogical trend, educational processes were understood based on the logic of adaptation to social structures currently in force. These works presented the concept of education as a fruitful strategy to address some of society's issues, without, however, changing its injustices in a significant or revolutionary way.

*However, only time will show any concrete changes. Thus we consider that the objective of "not revolutionizing", but of awakening to an educational practice was achieved. (D13 - 2000)*

*The present study enabled a reflection about these experiences and the needs inherent to the preparation of graduates to enter the work market and plan their professional and scientific career (D56 - 2014).*

In these studies, the role of educators was interpreted as the keeper of knowledge. This agent was responsible for transmitting, conveying or disseminating their knowledge to instruct/educate/train individuals.

*Both graduates and nursing managers described the efforts and commitment of professors to educate nursing technicians to practice their profession competently and safely. (T32 - 2015)*

*Professors must know their students and level their knowledge, learn about their needs, weak points to be developed, and thus allow students to learn the content pleasantly and effectively. (D63 - 2017)*

## DISCUSSION

The studies by EDEN/UFSC followed the trend in nursing scientific production, considering its concern in understanding the meanings and phenomena that individuals give to their experiences and practices. The proximity of the investigations with research objects that are part of current theme and lack greater theoretical-scientific basis can be a sign of researchers' responsibility to meet social needs by producing scientific works in the group.

The themes that most appeared in EDEN productions have also been addressed by other authors<sup>(15)</sup>, who establish that nursing practices in health services depend on educational practices. Thus, investigating issues relative to education<sup>(16-17)</sup> and EDEN's commitment to this research process are essential.

Concern with pedagogical issues in nursing gained greater visibility at the end of the 20th century<sup>(1)</sup>, a short amount of time to consolidate the educational assumptions in nursing scientific production. However, through how these pedagogical trends manifest, it is possible to consider that EDEN productions have gradually walked hand in hand with these concerns in different spaces of assistance, care, teaching and management<sup>(18)</sup>.

Throughout the writing process in the theses and dissertations, the pedagogical trends, and hegemonically, the liberation/creative trend, were expressed fluidly, as in the midst of the research process, the authors expressed their theoretical affiliations, world views, conceptions about human beings, learning and care. This is illustrated by the theoretical frameworks that were adopted, with emphasis to educator Paulo Freire. According to this author, education/training is a process for sharing knowledge and experiences, based on dialogical and plural movements, with the goal of integrating the studied themes and the reality of students, in search of an educational itinerary, based on the triad action-reflection-action, which can stimulate the critical consciousness of participants about their social reality - authentic praxis<sup>(19)</sup>..

The pedagogical trends expressed in the scientific production of EDEN and the most evident manifestation of the liberation/creative stance seems to be in line with an imperative movement for change in pedagogical relationships, open to dialogue and centered on student's learning<sup>(20)</sup>. This approach breaks with the essentially technical rationality and creates the conditions for investigative and educational practice that occurs in the encounter with others, based on respect and recognition of participants, who, in turn, weave relationships with actions based on the perspective of comprehensiveness<sup>(21)</sup>.

Considering that these approaches also express modes of producing research, the theses and dissertations used several strategies to contribute to the expression of a more liberating trend in investigations about nursing education, such as adopting active methodologies and recognizing the value of empirical knowledge. However, there the conceptual and operational issues of these movements must still be better clarified, especially when it comes to active methodology, in the sense of giving teachers conditions to provide significant student-centered educational experiences, associated with the liberation/creative trend<sup>(22)</sup>.

Currently, nursing education is undergoing a transition in paradigm, seeking to meet new professional demands, especially in terms of the need for critical-reflexive nurses, prepared for collective and integrated work and committed to social change<sup>(21)</sup>.

Adopting the critical-reflective approach throughout nursing education can reflect in the health and nursing work process that allows for care delivered by subjects who have values, culture and ideology, and who are committed to solving the concrete health problems of the population and health services<sup>(23)</sup>.

For nursing education to be guided by liberation pedagogical approaches, research groups in the field must promote the development of works that foster debate, showcase successful pedagogical experiences and display the results of education based on different pedagogical processes. This activity would certainly contribute to the (trans)formations that nursing requires in view of the new challenges of the contemporary world<sup>(24)</sup>.

Even with the significant expression of the liberation/creative trend, it is still relevant to gather efforts for the collective constructions of encouraging new possibilities in this field. The teaching environment, and above all, the health environment, reveals itself every day as a place of conflict and power relationships, in which the teaching-learning process cannot be subject to traditional (rigid) pedagogical approaches, contributing insufficiently to the education of nurses who are reflexive and transforming agents of social reality<sup>(21)</sup>. Thus, it is important to instigate movements capable of encouraging liberating education, which values the knowledge of individuals and fosters the actions of students as transformation agents of their environments.

Limitations of this study include the differences in the document's organizational format, in which it was more difficult to extract information from older studies; the challenge of classifying studies according to pedagogical trends, considering that some studies seemed to belong in both the liberation/creative and conventional trend; and the various themes investigated. Furthermore, the study only investigated documents from a specific research group and thus, the results cannot be generalized. On the other hand, this does not prevent future research with similar objects of study to use it as a basis to develop their discussions and/or identify similarities and differences in the theme.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The documentary analysis of the scientific productions allowed for the construction of new interlocutions among the theses and dissertations, the research lines and objectives of EDEN, allowing the authors to recreate a network of meaning among the works, their authors and adopted frameworks, connecting the pedagogical trends herein discussed.



Thus, the theses and dissertations produced by EDEN over its 25 years of existence have followed a path conceived by researchers who cultivated the challenge of addressing nursing education based on a perspective mainly based on the assumptions of liberation/creative pedagogy. This group stands out for its consolidation due to its time of existence, as well as for the search of its objectives and contributions to the national scenario.

It is essential that nursing education research groups develop investigations that foster the development of works that help raise questions and foster debates, that socialize successful pedagogical experiences and share the results of professional training based on different pedagogical processes.

Furthermore, studies in the sphere of nursing education are highly relevant as drivers of reflections about how nurses are being educated, positing, above all, that educational education must be connected with the social reality of the population and their health needs.

Finally, on recognizing that pedagogical approaches also ground and structure the thinking of researchers and their research practices, it is essential to reflect about the critical, creative and reflexive training of researchers (the pedagogical education of researchers).

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