



## THE NURSING ADMINISTRATION TEACHER: TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES

### O DOCENTE DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO EM ENFERMAGEM: FORMAÇÃO E COMPETÊNCIAS PROFISSIONAIS

### EL DOCENTE DE ADMINISTRACIÓN EN ENFERMERÍA: FORMACIÓN Y COMPETENCIAS PROFESIONALES

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#### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to identify, according to the perception of nursing administration professors, the necessary skills to work in higher education institutions. **Method:** exploratory study of a qualitative approach, carried out at two colleges in the interior of São Paulo state, with Nursing Administration professors. Data was collected from November 2013 to January 2014, through interviews, and analyzed by thematic analysis technique. **Results:** this study was composed of 10 professors and grouped the data into two categories: the first one was related to professors' qualification and/or training and the second one addressed teaching competences. The results showed skills such as professional qualification, improvement, leadership, interpersonal relationship and pedagogical strategies. **Conclusion:** teachers in the area should rethink their educational practice and training centers should reflect on the establishment of pedagogical strategies to improve professors' skills. **Descriptors:** Nursing; Faculty, Nursing; Professional Competence.

#### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** identificar, de acordo com a percepção de docentes de administração em enfermagem, as competências necessárias para atuar em instituições de nível superior. **Método:** estudo exploratório de abordagem qualitativa, realizado em duas faculdades do interior de São Paulo, com docentes de Administração em Enfermagem, e a coleta de dados realizada de novembro de 2013 a janeiro 2014, por entrevista, sendo estes analisados por análise temática. **Resultados:** estudo composto por 10 docentes e os dados foram agrupados em duas categorias: a primeira relacionada ao preparo e/ou formação do docente e a segunda a respeito de competências docentes. Os resultados mostraram competências como capacitação profissional, aprimoramento, liderança, relação interpessoal e estratégias pedagógicas. **Conclusão:** os docentes da área devem repensar sua prática educacional e centros formadores refletirem sobre o estabelecimento de estratégias pedagógicas para aprimoramento de competências nos docentes. **Descritores:** Enfermagem; Docentes de Enfermagem; Competência Profissional.

#### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** identificar, de acuerdo con la percepción de docentes de administración en enfermería, las competencias necesarias para actuar en instituciones de nivel superior. **Método:** estudio exploratorio de enfoque cualitativo, realizado en dos facultades del interior de São Paulo, con docentes de Administración en Enfermería, y la recolección de datos realizada de noviembre de 2013 a enero de 2014, por entrevista, siendo analizados por análisis temático. **Resultados:** estudio compuesto por 10 docentes y los datos fueron agrupados en dos categorías: la primera relacionada al preparo y/o formación del docente y la segunda al respecto de competencias docentes. Los resultados mostraron competencias como capacitación profesional, mejoramiento, liderazgo, relación interpersonal y estrategias pedagógicas. **Conclusión:** los docentes del área deben repensar su práctica educacional y centros formadores reflexionaron sobre el establecimiento de estrategias pedagógicas para mejoramiento de competencias en los docentes. **Descriptor:** Enfermería; Docentes de Enfermería; Competencia Profesional.

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## INTRODUCTION

The success of an organization depends to a greater or lesser extent on the training and/or qualification of its human resources. It is believed that investments in professional education in the health area are essential to qualify the care provided to users, with a view to consolidating a National Health System. In this regard, the National Curricular Guidelines (NCG) in Brazil have established an academic and professional profile for health workers that includes competences. For nursing professionals, through contemporary approaches, these competences are related to: Health care; Decision making; Communication; Leadership; Administration and Management and Permanent Education. The objective is that the training process can develop the capacity to *learn to learn*, which encompasses *learning to know*, *learning to do*, *learning to live together and learning to be*, favoring the empowerment of professionals with autonomy to ensure the comprehensiveness of health care.<sup>1</sup>

Specifically for nursing undergraduate courses, the NCG point out the challenge of training nurses with technical and political competence, as social subjects endowed with knowledge and reasoning, enabling them to intervene in contexts of uncertainty and complexity.<sup>2</sup>

In the field of education, competence can be defined as the ability to mobilize cognitive resources and it is associated with the ability to articulate and mobilize knowledge, skills and attitudes to solve problems.<sup>3</sup> Competence presupposes the capacity to act effectively in a given type of situation, supported by knowledge; it is based on the person's ability to mobilize knowledge, resources and experiences accumulated throughout life in an appropriate way to perform a job, task or to conduct a given situation in a professional activity, in a creative and innovative way.<sup>4</sup> For nursing education, competence equals the purpose of knowing and doing effectively.

The training of nurses for the current context of transformation of health services has been discussed and it has pointed to the need for changes in undergraduate nursing education. Curricular Guidelines for Nursing undergraduate course comprise these paradigmatic changes in determining that universities stimulate the articulation between teaching, research and care. Thus, seeking for a critical education in favor of social transformations is essential.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, in order to integrate theory and practice, service and teaching,

methodological proposals used in the training of health professionals should be rethought<sup>5</sup> in order to address work situations.

The great challenge in the training of nurses is to transpose what is determined by the NCGs by training professionals able to transform reality, surpassing the theoretical-practical domain demanded by the labor market as innovative agents and transformers of reality, inserted and valued in the labor market.<sup>6</sup> Thus, training institutions seek to adapt to this model from the perspective of competent and effective training for nurses in their work process. In this context, rethinking about the relevant role of the teacher becomes paramount, since it is known that little reflection on teaching, authoritarianism, fragmentation and focus on techniques are contradictions that need changes in order for the teacher to become competent in his/her teaching process<sup>7</sup> and thus can meet and exceed the demands of the labor market by triggering the necessary transformations in the training of nurses.

In relation to teaching-learning process during the undergraduate nursing course, the teaching of Administration, with respect to the Curricular Guidelines for this course, should provide nurses with the development of competencies so that they are able to exercise their work process, physical and material resources management and administrative knowledge. In general, nurses are expected to be managers and leaders in the health team.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the foundation in such discipline should encompass social, economic, and political aspects of scientific and technological development in the management area. Rethinking the teaching practice for the teaching of Nursing Administration and the reference competences for the work of these professionals constitutes a challenge, which has become increasingly a conscious decision.<sup>8</sup>

The disciplines focused on the management of nursing and administration in general go through difficulties regarding the managerial competences necessary for the professional performance. Assuming that managerial skills are essential in the nurses' work process, training schools have the responsibility to provide the student with technical-scientific, ethical-political and socio-educational conducts in order to enable the future nurse to recognize health as the right of all and to work with the purpose of guaranteeing the quality of health care at all levels of care, using the planning, organization, direction and evaluation of the nursing work process.<sup>9</sup> In order to do so, contents of nursing

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administration must permeate, throughout the course, the concretization of the proposed curriculum and make the interlocution with other disciplines, in such a way as to promote a contextualized teaching by competences, which must break old concepts aiming at new training proposals and professional performance based on innovative teaching methodologies and, finally, a current curriculum, contributing to the formation of subjects more capable of transforming social reality and aiming at training critical and reflexive professionals in the face of the demands of the labor market.

Teaching practice should be supported in changing processes. Professors should use strategies that reinforce students' critical capacity, their curiosity and their autonomy. Professors and students should be creative, instigating, curious, humble and persistent people.

In view of the above considerations and driven by the need to know the teacher who works in the area of nursing administration and to identify their work process, this study presents the following guiding questions: which competences are necessary for professors teaching administration to work in undergraduate nursing courses? What is the social and professional profile of these teachers?

Tracing the profile of nursing administration faculty and analyzing their perceptions regarding the competences needed for this area of education should provoke the reflection of these professionals, of future teachers in the area and of managers of higher education institutions on the importance of specific qualification and/or training for these teachers, favoring the development of competences that contribute in the teaching-learning process of undergraduate students.

The objective of this study was to identify the professional competences required for nursing management professors to work in higher education institutions.

## METHOD

This is an exploratory study with a qualitative approach, carried out in two nursing universities in the interior of the State of São Paulo, Brazil, which have in their curriculum the discipline of administration applied in nursing, regardless of the workload and the year in which it is offered. Thus, the scenario was composed of a private and a public nursing university; the nursing courses had a minimum workload of 2500 hours and

the purpose of this case study was the analytical generalization.

Study participants were professors of the discipline in the area of Nursing Administration, totaling 10 professionals. The inclusion criteria of the research were: nursing professors who have been working for more than two years in the area of nursing administration in the selected universities, assuming that, after this period, professors had already acquired minimum academic experience for effective performance as an educator in the profession.

For the data collection, a semi-structured interview guided by a previously tested script was used, made up of two parts: in the first part, an explanation was made about the research topic and there were questions for personal and professional identification of the subjects, such as age, sex, years since completion of undergraduate nursing course, time of work in the institution, graduation in the Administration area and which type (specialization, masters or doctorate). In the second part there were questions related to the research theme, that is, the professional competences of a professor for teaching in administration. The interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. The data collection was carried out from June to August 2014 and the interviews were recorded and transcribed in full by the researchers.

Data analysis was performed through the thematic content analysis. This mode of analysis seeks the core of meaning of a communication whose presence or frequency means something to the object of analysis. In order to carry out this technique, the interviews were organized in three sequential phases: pre-analysis, material exploration and treatment of results.<sup>10</sup> In the pre-analysis, an exhaustive reading of the interviews and the delimitation of the units of records (interview speeches) were carried out. In the next step, the data were classified from the units of records aiming to reach the comprehension of the text. In the third phase, the categorization was made by classifying the elements according to their similarities and by differentiation with later regrouping according to common characteristics.

This project was evaluated and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the School of Nursing of Ribeirão Preto - University of São Paulo, protocol CAAE: No. 11875712.0.0000.5393. Research participants signed the "Free and Informed Consent Form", in accordance with CNS Resolution 196/96.

## RESULTS

### ◆ Characterization of Participants

Research participants were 10 female teachers aged from 36 to 58 years. Time since completion of undergraduate course varied between 14 and 36 years and the time of work as a teacher varied between 04 and 33 years. Of the study participants, seven had graduate level with doctorate in the area of administration and management in nursing. Two of the interviewees reported that the institution where they work has training programs for teachers in the area of nursing management or administration, such as participation in scientific events and pedagogy courses, demonstrating the concern of educational institutions in offering updates to their employees as way of guaranteeing quality of teaching.

The results of this study allowed grouping the data into two categories: the first one was related to teacher qualification and/or teacher training and the second one regarding professors' competencies for teaching management.

## DISCUSSION

### ◆ Teaching qualification for the discipline Nursing Administration: Professional experience, experience in management position and professional improvement.

The contribution of undergraduate course and professional practice to the development of competences happens in different ways. In general, curricular disciplines address the basic concepts and delimit the guidelines for such processes. However, the nursing professor of the disciplines of Administration applied to Nursing must discuss with the student the relation between theory and reality of managerial practice.

Thus, as a result of theoretical and reflexive approximations with the help of the professor, the student will expand their knowledge about the relationship between service and care management.<sup>3</sup>

In this sense, the results showed that professional qualification is essential to administration professors, since the specific contents related to this area require preparation and/or training, as they are management tools of the future nurse.

The training referred by study participants relates to professional experience as an assistance nurse; experiences in management positions in hospital institutions and time of

work as a professor in the administration area, which is evidenced in the speeches below:

*[...] I had professional experience in a management position; I had worked for ten years as a care nurse and it helped me. I have been working for five years as a faculty member in management area. (P4)*

*[...] I had worked as a nursing manager and coordinator in two hospitals and currently I have been teaching the discipline of administration. [...] I believe that the competences required for teaching are nursing practice/experience, effective communication, theoretical knowledge and constant updates/improvements. (P5)*

From these notes, the nursing professor in a scenario of increasing and deep managerial changes must position themselves in an open and sensitive way to follow the evolution and to adapt to the new organizational, administrative and care challenges. The professor must have knowledge and strategic capacity to involve students through the use of participatory and reflexive methodologies, being able to discuss the concrete reality in the organization of services with technical and human competence.<sup>11</sup>

Research have shown that competence of professors of nursing administration should be focused on the scope of professional training, training through continuing studies and improvement courses, keeping teachers updated to keep up with changes and trends of labor market.<sup>8</sup> The experience of professors is extremely important to promote their training and it brings together diverse knowledge that may reflect in their quality of teaching and competence as a professional in the area of nursing administration.

Therefore, professional improvement is an important tool for nursing administration teachers by training and updating them to meet the quality requirements for teaching in the face of a very competitive scenario that requires even more experience and qualification to work efficiently.

Teaching in Nursing has been a research object in which the importance of theoretical support in assisting decision-making is verified. Also, scientific knowledge was pointed out as the articulating factor of academic knowledge, which promotes growth and personal and professional development,<sup>12</sup> and in which the inclusion of contents, disciplines and implementation of pedagogical strategies that stimulate scientific teaching and development in universities is important.

The large contingent of knowledge and the process of globalization have led to changes in the dynamics of human relations, requiring greater proximity, exchange and articulation

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of information. In order to meet these demands in the health area, there is a need for transformation in the way of working, acting mutually and seeing the other subject in the professional relationships of the health team.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, the need for constant search for knowledge and professional improvement should be associated with training in the area of interpersonal communication.

Effective communication is understood as one of the essential tools for the success of an organization, an individual and a nation. Therefore, organizations have been increasingly trying to make communications more flexible and facilitate the flow of information among their employees to be successful, since effective communication is a symbol of power and authority. In this context, people who want to achieve a high level of professionalism should seek excellence in their communication.<sup>14</sup> Thus, communication competence is a fundamental skill to be acquired in the professional performance of the teacher.

In addition, professors teaching in undergraduate nursing courses should develop activities related to reflection in action for the constitution of critical and creative subjects in their professional practice.<sup>6</sup> Thus, teaching must strengthen relationships with the labor world in order to increase the valorization of managerial competencies of nurses.

### Professional skills specific to teachers

Nursing education in higher education institutions is a complex and controversial activity, since it requires teachers to have specific competences for the training of nurses which should meet and exceed the expectations of the current labor market and provide meaningful learning.

A study carried out with hospital nurses identified the profile of competencies for professional performance, highlighting leadership skills, creativity, decision making, interpersonal relationships, among others, as essential skills for the best development of the nurse in practice.<sup>15</sup> Thus, this shows that, for developing practice and achieving such skills, qualification and academic training with the presence of articulating teachers with the current labor market and the health demands presented by the health institutions have become a relevant tool to prepare qualified and competent professionals in practice.

Thus, the Nursing Administration professor should develop, in addition to knowledge and care delivery, managerial knowledge, which must be in accordance with the competences,

the knowledge and the relationships. This does not mean occupying their place of work and their space with power, but rather, demonstrating its full potential in humanized and humble manners.<sup>16</sup>

In this study, professors realized the need for some competences, such as 'nursing leadership', 'interpersonal or relational competence' and 'knowledge and broadened vision of teaching for the implementation of pedagogical strategies', aiming at students' learning in nursing.

Nursing training follows the trend of the expansionist policy of higher education, reflecting the market demands and pressures of civil society groups to open new courses that meet the demands of current complexities, in which the tendency is to guarantee the formation of critical and reflective subjects,<sup>17</sup> which reinforces the importance of the role of nursing administration teachers in the training of these professionals.

However, one of the responsibilities of nursing professors is to raise awareness about the importance of formal teaching of leadership throughout the undergraduate course, as well as to encourage students on the importance of this competence in their work process and on the facilities that it will provide to nurses in managing the unit and their staff. The leadership, inherent competence of the nurse, can help them to build an adequate work environment, establishing healthy professional ties and dialogical processes with the other members of the nursing team.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, the use of this competence by the teachers of the administration area is crucial.

The experience of nursing professionals brings positive contributions to the leadership process and the development of some skills, such as the ability to teach their subordinates in the achievement of nursing competencies; the flexibility in teamwork; and the development of effective communication, which become the skills needed to train effective teaching leaders as they use the competence leadership in nursing.<sup>19</sup> The interviews below address the importance of the competence leadership in teacher training.

*[...] It requires theoretical knowledge in the area of nursing leadership, about leadership styles. (P1)*

*[...] I believe that theoretical knowledge in the leadership area and the methodology for problem-solving are skills necessary for the teacher's performance. (P2)*

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*[...] Management, policies, leadership skills are essential for the teacher. (P6)*

Considering that managing is one of the work processes of the nurse and that this professional has historically assumed managerial positions in health services, institutions, including education institutions, should define and develop managerial skills in nurses.<sup>20</sup>

In addition to the competence leadership in nursing, the participants mentioned interpersonal or relational competence. Professors of the area of administration in nursing, in spite of having attending specializations and complementary teaching courses in their professional training, when assuming this discipline, must be prepared to experience conflicts, uncertainties and relationship problems.

*[...] I think that, as competence of the teacher, it is necessary to be prepared to deal with the students; relationship competence is an important base and I have achieved this competence with work experience. (P10)*

Professors and students should realize the importance of knowledge about interpersonal relationships in order to favor the development of the learner. So, the interpersonal competence is an important tool for teachers.

In order to support the human aspects involved in the quality of nursing care, the nursing teacher must have mastery over theoretical and practical knowledge, which is exchanged with the students still inside the university. In this exchange of knowledge, a positive relationship with the teacher through dialogue and closeness contributes to a pleasant teaching and learning environment.<sup>21</sup>

*[...] Interpersonal communication is crucial to make interface between the teacher's knowledge and the work experience, and to be able to work with the students in the classroom and in the practice scenario. (P7)*

*[...] Communication, breadth of knowledge and assistance are skills to open knowledge to improve the discipline. (P3)*

Professors, in addition to listening to the students, should allow moments for the expression of feelings and doubts. The use of communicative skills entails the establishment of positive bonds and affective bonds, which provide the exchange of information and knowledge in a productive way. In order for the relationship between professors and students to take place appropriately, the nursing teacher must understand the meanings of communication, including non-verbal communication, which constitute the interpersonal dimensions that qualify

relationships.<sup>22</sup> This will encourage the student's interest on the topics studied, thus facilitating learning.

When sharing knowledge about communication, feelings and involvement with teaching, professors experience a moment of reflection on the teaching-learning process,<sup>23</sup> which makes interpersonal competence an important instrument for the qualified teacher.

The encouragement to extension projects by teachers was also an important point addressed in the study, according to the following:

*[...] I am part of an extension work in hospitals, and this is an important strategy that can be used by the teacher since it provides contact all the time with management and hospital management issues, thus providing professional competence to the nursing administration professor. (P6)*

Extension projects are part of teaching research and teaching activities, and also create a space for academic exchange among professionals, favoring greater learning of knowledge<sup>24</sup> so that the teacher develops teaching skills and can offer qualified teaching-learning.

In this study, nursing courses teachers referred to seek ways to improve as a professional, since they believe this is essential to overcome gaps in the work environment. Such statements are evidenced in the statements below:

*[...] I believe there are competences related to teaching in the sense of continuous learning, in the improvements, and also skills related to communication, to make interface between the teacher's knowledge and his/her work experience and to be able to address this with students. (P7)*

*[...] It is crucial that we seek training through specific courses in the area and specialization courses and participate in scientific events, experiencing the experiences of others, sharing experiences, seeking courses on the area that one has more affinity and interest, working on new ideas. (P8)*

*[...] The search for updating in first world countries and the attempt to bring to our reality what is most current are highly necessary strategies in the mobilization of other strategies for the exercise of work. (P10)*

Finally, knowledge and an expanded view of teaching in the area for the implementation of pedagogical strategies that favor students' learning in nursing were mentioned as an important competence for

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the teaching staff in nursing. Administration teachers referred the use of the method of discussion, interaction between teaching and care and theoretical and practical experience as a strategy.

*[...] I use methodology and didactics to solve problems. (P4)*

*[...] I make use of technological resources in the classroom, and I believe that professors must have didactic and pedagogical competencies to be able to work with this and to interface with nursing care. (P7)*

*[...] The professor must develop personal skills since there is no use in having only knowledge and not having pedagogical skills. Also, these must be constantly developing, new pedagogical dynamics, new knowledge, new ways of teaching in different formats. (P6)*

The use of technologies favor the development of several functions of the teacher and enable them to be qualified for new ways of assisting students and to increase the communication process between them,<sup>25</sup> which would allow greater qualification of teachers and resources for students' learning.

It is worth emphasizing that the nursing teacher must be constantly updated in the face of advances in technology, as well as in the search for specific knowledge in the area of nursing health to better work in face of possible changes.<sup>26-27</sup> However, in addition to using resources and methodologies in classroom, teachers should prepare students for contact with the labor market. It is necessary to orient them to the reality of services, which is evidenced by the teacher, as follows.

*[...] The approach of the student with his own perspective is necessary. Therefore, today it is very different their insertion within the services. I think that knowledge, the contact between students to approach their perspectives and the insertion in the services are important strategies for the mobilization of competences for the exercise of teaching work. (P9)*

The National Curricular Guidelines of the undergraduate nursing course are a reference to propose the professional profile to be formed, the Pedagogical Political Project, the organization and orientation of the curriculum and teaching practices, the production of knowledge and the relations established by the university with the health system.<sup>28</sup> In this sense, the implementation of these guidelines has been referenced as a milestone in the construction of a new paradigm for nursing education.

Adopting competencies, such as knowledge and an expanded vision of teaching to implement pedagogical political projects that

teachers will use as tools to train qualified and effective nurses, is crucial.

The theoretical knowledge and the ability to transmit knowledge, encouraging the student to discover the potentialities and attitudes that will facilitate the teaching-learning process, as well as interdisciplinarity, which requires a change in pedagogical structure and behavior, are factors that facilitate nursing students' learning.<sup>8</sup>

Nursing students have sought to apply theoretical knowledge in practice; however, the experiences in the clinical setting do not always correspond to what is expected. Complaints about the disarticulation between theory and practice are frequent. Faced with this, the preparation and teaching experience become essential in the context of teaching, research and extension. If the interest of professionals in the field of education is in fact focused on the real needs, forming critical-reflexive individuals, some changes in attitudes are needed; professors must be committed to the student. Teachers should see the student as an active individual in the teaching-learning process. Only then will the teachers be fulfilling the role of guiding them by performing more than the simple role of teaching.<sup>29</sup>

## CONCLUSION

This study raised important questions about the profile of the teaching staff in the area of nursing administration regarding their training, professional experience and competencies in the teaching-learning process.

The results evidenced subjects with greater professional experience in the area of management and administration, with specific training in administration and nursing management at the graduate level. Thus, when thinking about a profile of nursing faculty in the area of administration, one must take into account their ability to teach the discipline that imposes aspects related to the practical experience and the constant professional improvement.

Participants highlighted the importance of updating in the management area according to the global scenario. The current transformations occurring in the teaching process in nursing courses imply to the teaching professionals the mobilization of innovative attitudes and the use of pedagogical strategies that promote changes to contribute to the quality of the educational process.

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Professors in the area of nursing administration, when rethinking their educational practice, highlighted skills that they consider to be essential for their performance to be efficient, contributing to quality in teaching. Nursing leadership, interpersonal or relational competence and a broader view of teaching are identified as essential competencies for teachers and that may favor the implementation of pedagogical strategies for student learning.

The results of this study indicate elements that can promote reflection in the training centers on the need to establish pedagogical strategies for the improvement of teaching competencies in the area of administration so as to respond to the current National Curricular Guidelines.

The present study may stimulate the reflection of administration professors on the subject; however, there are still issues that need to be unveiled, for example, the perception of academics about their training regarding the skills acquired within the administration scope in nursing. For this reason, further research should be developed on this theme in order to encourage reflection of professionals of this area and of managers in educational institutions on specific training for teaching.

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