

# Students' participation in the development of the pedagogical project in a Nursing program

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## Students' participation in the development of the pedagogical project in a Nursing program

### Abstract

**Objective.** To describe and analyze the participation of students in the development of the pedagogical project (PP) in a Nursing program. **Methodology.** Exploratory-descriptive study with a qualitative approach, undertaken in the nursing program of a public higher education institution located in Piauí (Brazil). Interviews were carried out with twenty-two students from the 4<sup>th</sup> academic period onwards. Data collection took place in December 2009. The analysis of textual data was performed using the software Alceste 4.7, which was discussed based on the concepts of commitment, awareness, culture, dialogue and Paulo Freire's problematization pedagogy. **Results.** The analysis revealed three classes: Students' knowledge about the PP, collective participation in the development of the PP and progress of students' participation in the development of the PP. **Conclusion.** The results show that students are participants in the development of the PP.

**Key words:** education, nursing; /education; learning; students, nursing.

## La participación discente en el desarrollo del proyecto pedagógico del curso de Enfermería

### Resumen

**Objetivo.** Describir y analizar la participación de los estudiantes en el desarrollo del proyecto pedagógico (PP) del curso de Enfermería. **Metodología.** Estudio exploratorio-descriptivo, de abordaje cualitativo. Fue desarrollado en el curso de Enfermería de una institución pública de educación superior en Piauí (Brasil). Se realizaron entrevistas a 22 alumnos que cursaban desde el cuarto período en adelante. La recolección de la información se hizo en diciembre de 2009. Se hizo análisis de los datos textuales con la ayuda del programa Alceste 4.7, los cuales fueron discutidos sobre la base de los conceptos de compromiso, conciencia, cultura, diálogo y educación problematizadora del teórico Paulo

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Freire. **Resultados.** El análisis reveló tres clases: Conocimiento de los estudiantes sobre el PP, participación colectiva en el desarrollo del PP y avances de la participación de los estudiantes en el desarrollo del PP. **Conclusión.** Los resultados muestran que los estudiantes son sujetos participantes en el desarrollo del PP.

**Palabras clave:** educación en enfermería; /educación; aprendizaje; estudiantes de enfermería.

## A participação discente no desenvolvimento do projeto pedagógico do curso de Enfermagem

### ■ Resumo ■

**Objetivo.** Descrever e analisar a participação dos estudantes no desenvolvimento do projeto pedagógico (PP) do curso de Enfermagem. **Metodologia.** Estudo exploratório-descritivo, de abordagem qualitativa. Foi desenvolvido no curso de Enfermagem de uma instituição pública de educação superior em Piauí (Brasil). Realizaram-se entrevistas a 22 alunos que cursavam desde o quarto período em diante. A recolha da informação se fez em dezembro de 2009. Fez-se análise dos dados textuais com a ajuda do programa Alceste 4.7 os que foram discutidos sobre a base dos conceitos de compromisso, consciência, cultura, diálogo e educação problematizadora do teórico Paulo Freire. **Resultados.** A análise revelou três classes: Conhecimento dos estudantes sobre o PP, Participação coletiva no desenvolvimento do PP e, Avanços da participação dos estudantes no desenvolvimento do PP. **Conclusão.** Os resultados mostram que os estudantes são sujeitos participantes no desenvolvimento do PP.

**Palavras chave:** educação em enfermagem; /educação; aprendizagem; estudantes de enfermagem.

## Introduction

The changes in Undergraduate Nursing Programs, resulting from the extinction of the minimum curriculum by the Law of Educational Guidelines and Bases (LDB) number 9394/96 and from the subsequent implementation of the National Nursing Curriculum Guidelines (DCN/ENF) in the Report of the National Education Council/Higher Education Board number 1133/2001, propose a critical-reflexive educational perspective in which students are the subject of their education, which encourages their participation in the development of the program's pedagogical project.

The word participation can be understood as being a part of, taking part in or having part in an action. Being a part of it does not necessarily require taking part in it, which in turn means an intense and active participation.<sup>1</sup> In this study, the participation of students in the development

of the pedagogical project in a Nursing program is understood as a process in which students are capable of moving from the passive position that has been present in their graduation for a long time, to an active and inquisitive position about their education, taking part in it, an opportunity which is offered through the experiences in theoretical and theoretical-practical lectures, on-the-job training required by the curriculum, additional activities, monitoring, research initiation, among others.

It is noteworthy that the pedagogical project is characterized as a framework, an intended teaching guide, and which reveals the purpose, the intention of the educational act. It represents the pillar of academic and administrative management and involves aspects of philosophical, conceptual, political and methodological bases that define

the mission and goals of the course, the profile, skills and abilities that are essential to the graduation of nurses.<sup>2</sup> The pedagogical projects of nursing courses should be aligned with the DCN/ENF, which points to a critical, reflexive and transformative education. In this perspective, nursing students, while participating in the development of the pedagogical project, should contribute to achieve the objectives proposed in the program, to continuous reflections about them and their need for changes, in order to meet the educational and social demands. In this process, students become active subjects and influence their education and the society they belong to.

These reflections about the pedagogical project and the participation of students in their education encouraged the definition of the following guiding questions: what is the participation of nursing students in the development of the pedagogical project? How do nursing students participate in the development of the pedagogical project? Based on these guiding questions, the following objectives were determined: to describe and analyze the participation of students in the development of the pedagogical project in a nursing program.

Despite advanced experiences in attempting to consolidate what is proposed in the DCN/ENF, it can be noted that the active participation of students in nursing education is a process under construction and in transition. It is observed that vertical relations still predominate in this type of education, which do not support the participation of students as subjects. In relation to this aspect, it is necessary to break with the entrenched and hegemonic structures, so that teachers and students rethink the educational process and the relationships that support it. Rethinking educational practice permits reflections about the teaching practice, which includes the dialectical movement between doing and thinking about everyday teaching and learning.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, this research contributes to the discussion by educational institutions about the collective development of the pedagogical project of the course, involving students as active subjects in this process. In addition, it contributes to the

approach of the main challenges experienced that hinder this participation and which, as a result, entail implications for nursing education and affect these subjects' understanding of the identity of the course.

## Methodology

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This is an exploratory-descriptive research with a qualitative approach, which was based on the concepts of commitment, awareness, culture, dialogue and problematization education of the academic and educator Paulo Freire. The study was developed in the nursing program of a public higher education institution, located in Piauí (Brazil). This course was created in 1973 and authorized to operate through Rectory Act number 198/1974. In 2006, in accordance with the DCN/ENF, its first pedagogical project was developed. Prior to this program, the course was structured on the basis of curricula as, until then, there was no conceptual framework that guided the education of nurses.<sup>4</sup> Twenty-two students properly enrolled in this course participated in the research. Students from the 4<sup>th</sup> academic period onwards were included, who demonstrated availability and interest in participating. The subjects were randomly chosen, through a verbal invitation from the researchers to the students who attended the Coordination and the Department of Nursing.

In accordance with the recommendations of National Health Council Resolution 196/96, the project received approval from the Research Ethics Committee (CEP) of that institution, document CAAE: 0168.0.045-000-09, on 31 November 2009.

For data collection, the interview technique was used. A semi-structured guide was applied, which involved questions related to the understanding of the students about the pedagogical project and their participation in its development. The number of people interviewed had not been previously established. Subjects were progressively included, interrupted based on the saturation criterion.<sup>5</sup> The data obtained in the interviews were submitted to a textual analysis, using the software Alceste 4.7.

This software enables the quantitative analysis of textual data, that is, it relies on calculations made regarding co-occurrences of words in parts of texts.<sup>6</sup> The use of this automated program, which is based on a single file, requires the preparation of textual material that will constitute the corpus of analysis. Each corpus is composed of a set of Initial Context Units (ICU) defined by the researcher. In this research, the corpus was composed of twenty-two ICUs, resulting from the twenty-two interviews performed. Each ICU is separated by a command line that contains variables established by the researcher. The variables established were: age, semester and member of a student organization.

The analysis of the corpus through Alceste resulted in the classification of 266 Elementary

Context Units (ECUs), which are parts of similar sized texts, from the 376 ECUs selected, which represents 71% of the processed material. These ECUs were analyzed through the Descending Hierarchy Classification (DHC) and discussed according to the theoretical framework.

## Results

The software Alceste 4.7 reproduced the dendrogram of classes based on the DHC. Therefore, the contents resulting from the twenty-two interviews revealed the distribution into three classes, which showed the participation of students in the development of the pedagogical project (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The participation of students in the development of the pedagogical project in the nursing program

34 ECUs – 12.78%		163 ECUs – 61.28%		69 ECUs – 25.94%	
Class 1. Students' knowledge about the pedagogical project		Class 2. Collective participation in the development of the pedagogical project		Class 3. Progress of students' participation in the development of the pedagogical project	
Words	$\chi^2$	Words	$\chi^2$	Words	$\chi^2$
New*	52	Part*	23	Student*	65
Curriculum*	50	Student*	22	Health	33
Course*	42	Department	13	Today	31
Load*	35	Coordinator*	12	Political_project	30
Change*	27	Professor*	11	Devel*	30
Curricula*	23	Do*	10	Society	27
				Academic*	24
Variables	$\chi^2$	Variables	$\chi^2$	Variables	$\chi^2$
†ind_13	122	†ind_04	9	†ind_13	122
†ind_07	7	†ind_20	8	†ind_07	7
†ind_21	6	†ind_19	7	†ind_21	6
‡eest_1	127	‡eest_2	24	‡eest_1	127
†age_1	7	†age_2	16	†age_1	7
†semester_2	14	†semester_1	4	†semester_2	14

\* admits variations, † participant, ‡ member of student organization

**Class 1.** It deals with students' knowledge about the pedagogical project and showed that the students know the curriculum. The words of the

classes, in their reduced forms, according to Table 1: "new\*", "curriculum\*", "cours\*", "load\*", "change\*", "curricula\*", selected according to

the higher numbers of  $\chi^2$ , respectively: 52, 50, 42, 35, 27 and 23, associated with the complete words present in the ECUs, confirm this evidence. This statement can be confirmed by the opinions present in parts of the ECUs, as follows: *What I know about the pedagogical project is that my curriculum is new, updated, it was redeveloped a few times, now with the duration of five years and the course load has increased (...). What I know about the pedagogical project is that there are the meetings, and in these meetings the disciplines, the curriculum, are defined. I really like the curriculum here, if it is really this I have an idea about what the pedagogical project, the curriculum issue, the curriculum grade, the disciplines, the graduation, the post-graduation are (...). I do not really know if the pedagogical project is really this, but the issue of how the curriculum is developed, how the projects, assignments, new disciplines are being articulated, improving the curriculum, removing some and improving others, bringing new disciplines (...).*

**Class 2.** Collective participation in the development of the pedagogical project which, in accordance with the DHC presented in Table 1, is directly associated to class 1, and shows the student as a participant in the pedagogical project of the course. The most frequent words, in their reduced forms "part", "student\*", "department", "coordinator\*", "professor\*", and with higher degrees of statistical association ( $\chi^2$ ) with the class, respectively: 23, 22, 13, 12, 11, associated with the complete forms in the ECUs, permitted the understanding that students see themselves as a part in the development of the pedagogical project, which involves students, the Nursing department, coordinators and teachers. This evidence is confirmed by parts of the ECUs of this class: *I believe that who participates in the development of the pedagogical project is the head of the department, in conjunction with the coordination of the nursing course. The coordinators, the department staff, the teachers and the students participate in the pedagogical project, I think everyone who participates in the course. The course coordinators, the teachers,*

*the students are also part of this context of developing the pedagogical project. I believe that the coordinator and the teachers, everyone who takes part in the nursing course.*

**Class 3.** Progress of students' participation in the development of the pedagogical project, according to the DHC in Table 1, is indirectly associated to classes 1 and 2. The words in their reduced forms: "student\*", "health", "today", "political\_project", "devel\*" and "society", selected by the  $\chi^2$  values, which respectively correspond to: 65, 33, 31, 30, 30 and 27, when associated with their complete forms, show progress of students' participation in the development of the pedagogical project.

In this perspective, the words indicate that some nursing students consider the participation in the development of the pedagogical project important and legitimize it, given that, when taking part in or having part in, they can contribute and consolidate the conceptions of health, nursing and education, which is shown in parts of the ECUs. *The participation of students in the development of the pedagogical project is important to bring an academic view about what health is and even as a user of the healthcare system, as part of the population. Nowadays, the curricula are based on an ideology, they are not neutral, they reflect an ideology. Therefore, when students develop a political pedagogical project, they contribute with what they have about education and health, about nursing practice (...). I believe that students play an important role in the development of pedagogical projects, because teachers even have feedback in the classroom, they know what students want to study more, what they are more interested in and what they are not. It is important to have the view of people starting university, who is experiencing academic life, and give to this political-pedagogical program their view about what nursing practice is.*

## Discussion

Students' knowledge about the pedagogical project, seen through the semantic contents of

class 1, highlight graduation as the completion of a set of disciplines and their respective workloads, which shows that students need to deepen their knowledge about the pedagogical project as a guiding instrument of this graduation. Students, even though subject to different learning experiences, have difficulty seeing their complete education, the skills and abilities defined in the pedagogical project, the profile of this professional, the objectives and mission of the course. Therefore, the professional graduation at universities is focused on technical and scientific knowledge, so that it seems there is no space for reflection in this action.<sup>7</sup>

Although the educational context of the Nursing program these students are inserted in have started to make changes through the implementation of the pedagogical project since 2006, it is still difficult for students to actively participate in their education. It is believed that this situation will change if nursing students can overcome the unplanned educational process and start criticizing and questioning it as an object of knowledge, which represents the transition from naive to critical consciousness. This process is called awareness.<sup>8</sup>

Awareness allows students to participate in the development of the pedagogical project, so as to take control of their education, reflecting it, criticizing it, and understanding it as a whole. The more they are aware, the more knowledge they will have of the reality and more they will penetrate into the essence of their education, in which they are to analyze it. In this perspective, the knowledge about the course pedagogical project will regain meaning and will make sense through the action-reflection of students about nursing practice, about their world and their reality.

The semantic contents seen in the ECUs of class 2 show that the development of the pedagogical project occurs through the participation of students, together with the other members of the academic community. The parts of the ECUs showed in the results reinforce that students take part in this process. It is necessary, however, to

encourage students to take part in this process, and thus fulfill the assumptions of the program, which requires students moving on from the passive position in the teaching-learning process. The participation of students as subjects in the development of the pedagogical project is one of the conditions for the educational objectives to be achieved.<sup>9</sup> In addition, such participation causes the members to create an institutional identity, as well as to understand the culture of the group which they belong to, since the identity of the course, its purposes and the revelation of their commitments are retained in this program.<sup>10</sup>

For students to effectively take part in the pedagogical project, the problematization pedagogy should be adopted. In this education, based on creativity and reflexivity, critical awareness is developed and it results in the inclusion of the students in the world as transformative subjects, as revealers of the reality.<sup>11</sup> It is understood that, through the problem-posing education, nursing students can holistically understand their education, acting on and reflecting about it, posing problems in its relation with reality. Thus, students do not only participate in the development of the pedagogical project, but also consciously learn it in the practice, giving a new meaning to their knowledge about this program. This participation enables the students to gain awareness of their trajectory, intervene in their limits, take better advantage of their potential and coherently deal with the difficulties faced.<sup>10</sup> In fact, in this movement, students can express their thoughts, criticizing or materializing the pedagogical project, thus confronting or corroborating with the conceptions that permeate it, with the profile, the skills and abilities of the nurses they wish to be when graduating, and the society and the healthcare system aimed for.

In class 3, the semantic contents show the advances in students' participation in the development of pedagogical project of the course. It is important to reinforce that this class surpasses classes 1 and 2 (Table 1), which highlights its qualitative importance in the study. Such fact is evidenced by the words that constitute it, which

have the highest Chi-Square scores. Parts of the ECUs in this class reinforce that the students have the knowledge, vision of their world and recognize that their views need to be considered for the nursing course to represent the aspirations of the academic and non-academic community. There is, therefore, a critical awareness about the participation in the development of the pedagogical project.

This critical awareness shows the dialectical and dialogical process that exists in the construction of changes to the way of teaching and learning in this course. It also shows that this change cannot be done homogeneously, because the results presented in classes 1 and 3 indicate differentiated stages of the students in this process. The critical awareness involves subjects who become different in relation to their performance as nurses and are more sensitive to see the other as a citizen. It also requires that they have a humanistic view, gaining a better understanding of the people who receive care and their reality.

The awareness of students favors the graduation of nurses who cause an impact and changes in their social micro-spaces, due to their ability to understand the real problems of the context and society they operate in. In addition, people who question the work process and meet the healthcare needs in relation to the various individual and collective dimensions. In this context, nurses, as social workers, can take the position of transformative agents. While changing the micro-spaces, they contribute to the destruction of hegemonic care practices and become multiplying agents of the healthcare practices aimed at the promotion of health and the prevention of diseases and injuries. So, the graduation of critical and reflexive nurses, social changers, meets the current demands placed on healthcare professionals, which involve the preparation and qualification for collective health. In this scope, the Family Health Strategy, which has been a major work area for nurses, needs to be highlighted.

This strategy requires a critical practice that is transformative and reconstructive of knowledge,

so that specialized training, subject to market demands and to the indiscriminate use of technology, is not sufficient for the performance of nurses in public health, working with families and in the communities with complex and dynamic social and healthcare needs.<sup>12</sup> In this perspective of a critical and transformative training, when nursing students gain critical awareness, they are able to commit to their education. The first condition to take on a committed act is being in the world and knowing that you are in it, something that conditions your conscience.<sup>13</sup> The commitment occurs in the engagement of individuals in reality. Thus, this is not a passive act, but action and reflection about the reality, which requires knowledge.<sup>13</sup> By consciously engaging in this reality, students are no longer neutral and assume a critical position in their relationship in the world and with the world. This fact suggests that, despite the conservatism of traditional educational methods, in which power relations emerge in educational spaces, some teachers have already overcome these practices and consolidated educational conceptions, which encourage student awareness and changes in the training and professional practices of nurses.

## Conclusion

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Based on the semantic contents obtained in classes 1, 2 and 3, the aim was to highlight some aspects about student participation in the development of the pedagogical project of the course. The results show that students in this study are moving to change their position in relation to the educational process, which requires them to become part of the pedagogical project development. It is important to mention that change exists in a dialectic relation with stability, and that both result in human action on the world. Change is a dynamic, slow and gradual process of balance disruption.<sup>13</sup> Such fact can also be shown when students recognize that, in this course, there exists a concern with training critical nurses who are able to absorb and change their reality.

They demonstrate, therefore, to have a view of the world in which and with which they are, and point to a critical awareness about their education. The change in students' position in relation to the education process permits the continuous assessment of the coherence and contradictions of professional formal education, as a way to improve the Pedagogical Project based on the DCN/ENF. It also requires the increasing knowledge about the pedagogical project as a guiding instrument in their education, going beyond the set of disciplines and their respective workloads. Therefore, the results of this study should be shared with the academic community of the nursing program, emphasizing signs of progress in relation to students' participation in the development of the pedagogical project in nursing education.

It is necessary, however, to continue this movement. Hence, by participating, the nurses desired by the institution and in society are prepared and are able to become agents of transformation. Also, it can be emphasized that this participation should occur in other spaces besides the classroom, and which include student organizations, extension projects, monitoring and research, among others.

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