

# Nursing Education: conceptualizing a pedagogical project from the view of professors

Educação em Enfermagem: conceituando projeto pedagógico na visão de professores

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To understand the pedagogical project concept of the professors of the Paulista School of Nursing, and to identify the challenges and the limits faced by them during its development.

**Methods:** Qualitative study, in the oral history thematic modality. Using semi-structured interviews, the narratives of six professors who participated in, at least, half of the meetings for the pedagogical development were obtained. The statements were recorded, interpreted text transcribed, recreated and analyzed, respecting the methodological steps and ethical precepts. The Social World Theory of *Pierre Bourdieu* was used as a reference for analysis.

**Results:** The concept of the pedagogical project was limited to the curriculum frameworks; training of the professors is the main difficulty for the planning phase of the paradigmatic change.

**Conclusion:** Professors value the pedagogical project development, but do not advance the proposition because they are steeped in previous models that support workload and organization according to specialty.

## Resumo

**Objetivo:** Aprender o conceito de Projeto Pedagógico dos professores da Escola Paulista de Enfermagem e identificar os desafios e os limites enfrentados por eles durante sua elaboração.

**Métodos:** Estudo qualitativo, na modalidade História Oral Temática. Por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas obtiveram-se as narrativas de seis professores que participaram de, no mínimo, metade dos encontros para essa construção. Os depoimentos foram gravados, transcritos, transcritos e analisados, respeitando-se as etapas do método e os preceitos éticos. Foi utilizada a Teoria de Mundo Social de *Pierre Bourdieu* como referencial de análise.

**Resultados:** O conceito de Projeto Pedagógico ficou circunscrito à grade curricular e a formação docente é a principal dificuldade para a mudança de paradigma na ação do planejamento.

**Conclusão:** Os docentes valorizam a elaboração do Projeto Pedagógico, mas não avançam na proposição porque estão fixados em modelos anteriores que privilegiam a carga horária e a organização por disciplinas.

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## Introduction

The process of the Pedagogical Project of the Curriculum (PPC) development of the undergraduate nursing program of Paulista School of Nursing (*Escola Paulista de Enfermagem* -EPE) of the Federal University of São Paulo (*Universidade Federal de São Paulo*- UNIFESP) during the period of 2010-2012, was a remarkable experience that should be studied, due to the reference-model role played by this institution.

Currently, much has been discussed about the importance of the pedagogical project (PPC) development. A collective development is proposed, in a conscious movement of cooperation and solidarity. Based on this premise, it is opportune to understand the perception of the professors who participated in the aforementioned development process. The perception here is understood as the dimension of knowledge, and not just as learning by the senses.<sup>(1)</sup>

According to the National Education Guidelines and Bases law (*Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional* - LDB 9394/96),<sup>(2)</sup> educational institutions are responsible for organizing pedagogical proposals and reflecting on their educational intention, an action which must be collectively conducted, with the participation of the different individuals involved in the school.

The PPC consists of a set of collective actions that aimed to create structural changes in the organization of the pedagogical work. It is a fact that its development occurs within a dynamic, continuous, flexible and unfinished process; it requires a permanent commitment from its participants, which is necessary for its transformation.<sup>(3)</sup>

This project requires deep reflection on the institution's purposes, its social role, and a clear definition of the path to be followed and the operationalization of the actions that will be undertaken.<sup>(4-6)</sup> The priorities of citizen development, pedagogical and didactic activities that led the institution to reach its goals are expressed in the PPC.<sup>(7-9)</sup>

Teaching in the health care is a challenge for higher education institutions (*Instituições de ensino superior*-IES) to think the PPC as a training model capable of transforming practices, seeking to over-

come the health problems and improving the individual and collective health care.<sup>(10,11)</sup> The EPE, founded in 1939, sought to adapt the course to the determinations of the regulatory teaching agencies and the nursing profession. This behavior was fixed in its teachers, who show difficulty in breaking with this model.

Changing in education implies disrupt with crystallized practices and confronting challenges in search of a formation that contemplates the needs pointed out in the policies established by the Ministry of Education and Health, as well as the priorities and principles of the *Unified Health System* (*Sistema Único de Saúde*-SUS), as well the needs of changes indicated by the professionals of the health area.<sup>(10,12)</sup>

Given this background, it is imperative to capture the concept of the Pedagogical Project (PPC) from the EPE- UNIFESP professors, and to identify the challenges and limits faced by them during its development, as the school should be seen as a producer of knowledge - not merely as reproducers of knowledge - and the professors must discuss the factors that enable its selection and organization.<sup>(13,14)</sup>

## Methods

The method used in the study was that of an oral history (OH), which provides qualitative interpretations of historical-social processes and, by means of precise methods and techniques in which the constitution of sources and oral files plays an important role, which aims to highlight and focus analysis according to the experience of social individuals. Oral history means to produce historical and scientific knowledge, not simply to provide an organized report of the life and/or experiences of individuals.<sup>(15)</sup>

Listening to the narratives of the EPE professors who participated in the development of the PPC, in the period between 2010-2012, enabled us to obtain a volume of original and relevant data. Among the types of OH, thematic oral history was the one that best met the purposes of the study.<sup>(16)</sup>

The study scenario was the Paulista School of Nursing (EPE - UNIFESP), a septuagenarian institution that has been continuously educating nurses, and has become a reference for this practice in the country. It was decided to listen to the statements of the EPE professors who contributed to the development of the PPC, with eligibility criteria including: participation in at least 50% of the meetings conducted for this purpose, names identified by means of attendance lists and meeting minutes comprising six subjects. These subjects agreed to participate, after being contacted, and were presented the study objectives and signed the Terms of Free and Informed Consent form (TFIC). It also contains the cession statement for research purposes, which eliminates the requirement for a copyright assignment letter. These subjects were identified by letters of the alphabet, according to the order of the interviews. The project was previously submitted to the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of São Paulo (*Universidade Federal de São Paulo*), and was approved on September 24, 2014, under protocol No. 804,651.

Interviews were scheduled, and the participant was aware that electronic recording would be used to support data collection. The interview was conducted by a researcher who had no ties with the participants. The meetings were scheduled according to the availability of each interviewee and, when necessary, repeated until the subject matter was exhausted; in some cases, two to three meetings were necessary to clarify and deepen the information provided in previous interviews.

A semi-structured interview script was used to obtain the statements, and the guiding question was: "How did you, [name of the participant], perceive the collective development of the PPC at the Paulista School of Nursing, during the 2010-2012 period?" According to the narrative evolution, the need for resumption of focus and deepening of some aspects, other questions were added, based on the script.

Following the steps of the method, the recorded interview was transcribed in full and sent to the participant for knowledge and validation. At that moment, he/she was able to review the text and make

changes, if necessary. Once the participant was satisfied with the text, each page was printed with the transcribed text of his/her interview, initialed by the interviewee, and then archived.

Subsequently, a copy of these validated transcripts was subjected to repeated readings by the principal investigator, coding of the texts with letters and numbers in the excerpts that dealt with the same subject. The related themes were grouped after coding, from which the transcribed text was developed, receiving a treatment that ordered the text in a linear and non-recurrent narrative, as occurs with speech, approaching the reader and better communicating the meaning, but keeping the original intention of what was recorded.<sup>(16,17)</sup> A doctorally prepared nurse, who was expert in the HO method, but not linked to the research in focus, compared this transcript with the text of the transcript initialed by the interviewee, to verify if the intentionality contained in the reports was not modified in that process and if all the information, impressions and opinions on the object of study enunciated by the interviewee were included, validating the interpreted text.

After this validation of the interpreted text, the previously assigned codes that were grouped by similarity and thematic pertinence, three categories of analysis emerged, which were again validated by a doctorally prepared nurse and then analyzed and discussed following the literature on the object of study, and the concepts of Pierre Bourdieu.<sup>(18)</sup> This paper will present the results corresponding to the Vision category about the pedagogical project.

Bourdieu considered the school to be a space for the reproduction of social structures, capital transfers, and of legitimating positions in the field, defined as a system or a structured space of positions.<sup>(18)</sup>

The EPE-UNIFESP is a social space of professional action, of those who participate in educating nurses. This institution is a scientific field, endowed with a force, which confers on its social members a certain cultural, social and economic capital.

So, if the school is a field, that is, a space in which cultural capital is transferred and that contributes to the formation of *habitus*, the develop-

ment of a PPC and a curricular matrix is not isolated from the internal dynamics of a field, its agents, their positions, and the relationships resulting from this process.<sup>(19,20)</sup>

One of these positions is that of pedagogical action, because it selects and legitimizes the culture through imposition and inculcation, seeking to form the individual's *habitus* according to the dominant culture. The greater the prestige and recognition of the institution, the greater its pedagogical authority and its cultural capital.

## Results and Discussion

As a result, the transcription of the interviews generates the statements for analysis. Analyzing the statements, the professor point of view about the pedagogical project emerged, as presented below.

The need for schools to adapt their pedagogical projects and their curricular organization to meet the demand of students has been indicated within the scientific literature, to guarantee quality education and to seek critical and reflexive autonomy.<sup>(10,21)</sup> Therefore, it is necessary to break with the certainties of what is already established. The statement of Subject B, denotes that EPE professors are concerned about undertaking changes that meet the demands for nurses' education:

*Everyone knows about the importance of a PPC in any institution that has, as an objective, the matter of education, and here, in the nursing school, it would not be different. (...) Society is changing as well as technologies and, at some point, we have to sit down and discuss what happened to evaluate and propose changes.* (Subject B)

The statement of the subject above, reinforces the need for the HEI to assume the political pedagogical commitment and aware that it must be realized and collectively accepted, with the involvement of each one in the process. However, the statement of subject B showed that not everyone participated, which impacted on the process of the proposal adherence.

*I mean the absence, even in the discussion, in the debate. Let's talk about the frequency: we can even*

*compare, in an objective way, with the presence list ... how many professors have established the plan of the institution and how many were actually present and participated in this discussion, this development, 90%? I do not think so. It was 50%? 40%?* (Subject B)

The LDB 9394/96 requirements, the Law of the Professional Exercise of Nursing and the National Curriculum Guidelines for Health and Nursing were met during the development of the PPC at EPE, in addition to the discussions conducted by the Brazilian Association of Nursing (*Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* - ABEn) in the National Seminar on Guidelines for Nursing Education (*Seminário Nacional de Diretrizes para o Ensino de Enfermagem - SENADEns*), and health-inducing policies, which are indicated as guiding elements,<sup>(22,23)</sup> as perceived in the statement of Subject C.

*One of the challenges was to try to deconstruct what we already had in the PPC, and that was not responding to the organizations, to the MEC, LDB, MEC Curriculum Guidelines, and the market needs.* (Subject C)

It can be verified that only those internal to the school are able to attribute identity to the PPC. This identity of nurses to be educated means, above all, the result of collective reflections, considering the organization of the pedagogical work, and the reality in which the EPE is integrated.

During the restructuring process of the PPC-EPE, an understanding was identified about the concept and importance of the project to the construction of the institution's identity, because the school is organized to transmit culture, procedures and reflective programs, and acts as a habit-forming force that facilitates this transmission, based on the Bordieu statements,<sup>(20,23)</sup> as reported by Subject F:

*The construction of this pedagogical project is not just to do it. It is dynamic and continuous. If we lose the comprehensive picture, if we do not have moments to look, discuss and think about what is working, what has already been integrated and what has not, where are the edges, what remains detached. It is in that sense.* (Subject F)

This action was permeated by limits that brought difficulties. Every debate and decision making pro-

cess in the collective sphere presented difficulties, and the same thing happened in the development of PPC. Changes imply giving up the safety of what is already done and, often, this makes the position taken difficult, generating conflicts.<sup>(5,7,24)</sup>

The statements of the interviewed subjects, some limits were indicated, such as the length of the process, absence of and lack of commitment of professors in the discussion, which made the process tiring, often leading to the closure of the discussions to be performed by small groups, as stated by Subject C.

*“Wow! What a lack of vision!” A boycott of ignorance and aiming to maintain power. Because there was no opportunity for deeper discussion. People from the UEL (University of Londrina), University of São Paulo (USP) also presented changes made in their curricula. It was interesting, but there was no quorum. Always the same people take part, watch and discuss (...) But, between quotation marks: “whoever needs it most, does not come, stays out of this activity.” There were many unpleasant things. The way people acted, derived the most profound strength of the pedagogical discussion, the way you want to get with the student, the profile. (Subject F)*

For Bourdieu,<sup>(19)</sup> this power mentioned by Subject F is represented by symbolic capital. This capital gives a certain power, and it is valued by a certain social group.<sup>(19,24)</sup> This force may lead some people to conformity, leading them to uncritical positions, because for these subjects, the context is seen from the perspective of no change, as reported by Subject D.

*“I found it tiring. In the end, sometimes we were exhausting these discussions and had no more idea of how to discuss, to put together, being democratic. I felt that sometimes ideas were accepted, because it was that, there was no more, and if something were maintained according to the group perceptions, we had great changes.” (Subject D)*

For the subjects to consider the changes to be necessary, they must perceive it, participate in the decisions and be willing to undertake them. As stated by subject E, this effective participation also needs to be deepened with regard to the pedagogical issues.

*Most of us, professors and administrative technicians, stop being a nurse one day to become a teacher in the other; that is, we do not have didactic and pedagogical training, and that is where the limitation begins. The limit is that, to change and broaden my view, I also need to learn. We had to provide this for yesterday, for teachers and, in a general way, to be able to improve this pedagogical didactic part. We always talk, here at school, about providing this to teachers, so they can be qualified, improve, but I don't see any progress.” (Subject E)*

Bourdieu's<sup>(19)</sup> approach leads us to consider that pedagogical practice without knowledge and reflection plays the sole function of inculcating *habitus*, which tends to reproduce social inequalities, which seem to be incapable of transforming themselves in the light of new educational paradigms.

As seen, the PPC-EPE development process presented limits and, ahead of these, a series of challenges to be overcome were identified, such as: greater integration among professors and understanding of the concept of interdisciplinarity and its implications in the teaching-learning process.

Interdisciplinarity appeared in the discourse of several subjects, but was presented in a simplistic view of the concept, as can be seen in the statement of Subject B, for whom the proposal is only a result of integration, in the sense of joining content and not the relationship between disciplines:

*To optimize this design, in order to reduce the workload, the idea was that content would not be repeated. (...) The interdisciplinary question is discussed. In my view, we did not progress on this because we did not make this communication between disciplines. The discourse of every one is that their specialty is more important, because only it will give this knowledge; thus, it cannot be cut.” (Subject B)*

It should be emphasized that the concept of interdisciplinarity goes beyond the content/specialty relationship; is based on the interaction between two or more specialties on the scope of knowledge, methods and learning, breaking with the paradigm of isolated specialties, as it involves questions about the meaning and relevance of the collaboration of the specialties, searching for knowledge, according to the degree of integration between them.<sup>(25)</sup>

The statements showed the need for professors to acquire pedagogical knowledge that guides the elaboration of a PPC, conferring on it its own identity and not only constituting itself in a list of specialties and isolated content that present specialties hierarchically.

The symbolic power was exercised in the discussions of the PPC of EPE, according to the interviewees, because not all participated effectively, allowing decisions to be made by a small group. This result was also attributed to the fact that some individuals did not feel they were active subjects in the process, and considered themselves devalued by their position in the field, and as coping strategies these individuals delegated to others this decision-making role in the definition of PPC.

It can be seen that the school must break with fragmentation and hierarchical control, and develop conditions to generate other forms of pedagogical work. Applying the *Bourdieu* concept, it can be said that it is in the relationship between the agents and the structure that transformations in the *habitus* are possible. The teaching process requires the development of necessary skills so that, in a concrete situation, the acquired theoretical resources are mobilized, allowing the transformation of inculcated *habitus*.<sup>(19,20)</sup>

This reorganization must begin from the inside out, with a collective commitment, in order to break with what exists and no longer simply meet current needs, but rather move forward. Thus, the PPC will be a reflection of daily life and not just a document to be followed, as it requires continuity of actions, decentralization of power, democratization in decision making, and a process of continuous assessment of an emancipatory nature.

## Conclusion

It is possible to identify that professors understood the significance of the PPC, recognized the meaning and importance of its development to be conducted collectively, as well as perceived the role played as a guiding instrument of the HEI. However, it

is concluded that, in this process of development, the inflexibility of some social individuals led to the difficulty of reaching a common denominator, constantly causing the emptying of decisions.

The process of the PPC - EPE development was not freed from the condition of symbolic power, and its development ended up an arena of conflicts in the face of the difficulty of letting go of the education references, elements that comprise the *habitus* of the group, which are inculcated and, therefore reproduced without reflection. The discussions were marked by moral values inculcated in the professorial educational process, that tend to prioritize the amount of content, valuing the curricular matrix much more than other elements that compound the project, such as: curriculum typology, teaching-learning strategies, and forms and instruments of evaluation. It is pertinent to emphasize that these considerations were due to the analysis of the perceptions revealed by the interviewed professors of this teaching institution during this process of development of the PPC, and indicate that there is still a long way to go in the direction of the appropriation of the pedagogical concepts, as well as how to deal with the resistances and obstacles in the teaching practice.

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## Collaborations

Magalhães SMF, Gabrielloni MC, Sanna MC, and Barbieri M contributed to the study design, analy-

sis and data interpretation, revision of the article, relevant critical review of the intellectual content, and final approval of the version to be published. It should be noted that there are no conflicts of interest for the authors, all of whom contributed in a fundamental way to the conduct of this study.

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