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NURSES TRAINED THROUGH THE INTEGRATED CURRICULUM PROGRAM: INSERTION AND PROFESSIONAL PERFORMANCE

ENFERMEIROS EGRESSOS DO CURRÍCULO INTEGRADO: INSERÇÃO E ATUAÇÃO PROFISSIONAL

ENFERMEROS EGRESADOS DEL CURRICULUM INTEGRADO: INSERCIÓN Y ACTUACIÓN PROFESIONAL

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to verify the insertion in the labor market and the professional performance of graduates of the Integrated Curriculum of the Nursing Course of the State University of Londrina. ***Method:*** descriptive, exploratory study with a quantitative approach. Of the 115 graduates, 88 (76.5%) answered the electronic questionnaire from July to October 2011. To analyze the data, the Microsoft Office Excel 2010 program was used, and the results were presented in absolute and relative frequencies by means of a table. ***Results:*** the insertion in the labor market occurred mainly in the hospital field. Most of the respondents maintained an employment bond and the salary ranged from two to seven minimum wages. The graduates acknowledged that having been trained through the Integrated Curriculum Program helped them to gain their first job and confidence in their professional activities. ***Conclusion:*** For many of them, employability is a reality verified and attributed to the training and the professional scenario of the region. ***Descriptors:*** Nursing Education; Curriculum; Labor Market; Human Resources Training.

RESUMO

Objetivo: verificar a inserção no mercado de trabalho e a atuação profissional de egressos do Currículo Integrado do Curso de Enfermagem da Universidade Estadual de Londrina. ***Método:*** estudo descritivo, exploratório, de abordagem quantitativa. Dos 115 egressos, 88 (76,5%) responderam ao questionário eletrônico no período de julho a outubro de 2011. Para analisar os dados, utilizou-se o programa Microsoft Office Excel 2010, sendo os resultados apresentados em frequências absoluta e relativa por meio de tabela. ***Resultados:*** a inserção no mercado de trabalho deu-se, sobretudo, no campo hospitalar. A maioria dos respondentes mantinha um vínculo empregatício e faixa salarial de dois a sete salários mínimos. Os egressos reconheceram que o ensino pelo Currículo Integrado auxiliou na conquista do primeiro emprego e na segurança para a atuação profissional. ***Conclusão:*** para muitos deles, a empregabilidade é uma realidade constatada e atribuída à formação e ao cenário profissional da região. ***Descritores:*** Educação em Enfermagem; Currículo; Mercado de Trabalho; Formação de Recursos Humanos.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: verificar la inserción en el mercado de trabajo y la actuación profesional de egresados del Currículum Integrado del Curso de Enfermería de la Universidad Estadual de Londrina. ***Método:*** estudio descriptivo, exploratorio, de enfoque cuantitativo. De los 115 egresados, 88 (76,5%) respondieron al cuestionario electrónico en el período de julio a octubre de 2011. Para analizar los datos, se utilizó el programa Microsoft Office Excel 2010, siendo los resultados presentados en frecuencia absoluta y relativa por medio de una tabla. ***Resultados:*** la inserción en el mercado de trabajo se dio sobretodo, en el campo hospitalario. La mayoría de los respondientes mantenía un vínculo empleador y salario de dos a siete salarios mínimos. Los egresados reconocieron que la enseñanza por el Currículo Integrado auxilió en la conquista del primer empleo y en la seguridad para la actuación profesional. ***Conclusión:*** para muchos de ellos, el empleo es una realidad constatada y atribuida a la formación y al escenario profesional de la región. ***Palabras clave:*** Educación en Enfermería; Currículo; Mercado Laboral; Formación de Recursos Humanos.

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INTRODUCTION

Nursing training has long been the subject of study and reflection. There have been many debates about methodological innovations for teaching with the aim of training professionals that meet the needs of the labor market and who act with a sense of social responsibility, commitment to citizenship, ensuring the comprehensiveness of the services offered.

In 2016, there were 442,397 nurses registered in the Regional Nursing Councils throughout Brazil and 1,020 higher education institutions (HEIs) registered in the Ministry of Education that offered the Undergraduate Nursing Course. The high number of graduates is an achievement for the profession. However, this cannot measure the quality of teaching and learning.[1-2]

The National Curricular Guidelines for the Nursing Course (DCNs-ENF) propose the professional profile of a generalist, humanist, critical and reflexive nurse, fit for the practice of nursing based on science, respecting ethical principles, able to know problems and health-disease situations and intervene in them, working with social responsibility and maintaining commitment to citizenship, in order to promote the integral health of the human being.[3]

The challenge in professional training is characterized by the education of competent citizens in the practical application of knowledge, with the capacity to understand, adapt to the labor market and find solutions to everyday situations on which they must reflect in order to re-significate the knowledge. The discussions that involve the labor market in the health field converge in the vision of an education capable of uniting theory and practice, making it possible for nurses to work in a context of uncertainties.[4]

Among the schools that seek to promote the training sought by the DCNs-ENF, there is the Nursing course of the State University of Londrina (UEL), which implemented, since the year 2000, the Integrated Curriculum. It differs from the traditional curriculum by dynamically articulating theory with practice and fostering the integration between academia, service, and community. It also favors the development of critical-reflexive learning through the active and autonomous participation of students.[5]

The Pedagogical Project of the Course (PPC) aims to "train generalist nurses with social responsibility, having as guiding principle the defense of life, health as a right and the relief of suffering in terminality".[6]

The PPC in Nursing of UEL - in the Integrated Curriculum modality - completed more than a decade of implementation, and this event provided a reflection on the role of the university in the training of professionals that are able to respond to the demands of society and health. This gave rise to the need to investigate the insertion of the graduates of this course into the labor market in relation to the questions: where are these graduates working? What activities do they develop? What is the form of admission to the labor market? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the Integrated Curriculum training when it comes to achieving the first job and the confidence to exercise the profession? These questions refer to the research problem: how has the insertion and professional performance of graduates of the Integrated Curriculum Program occurred in the labor market?

In this sense, this study aims to verify the insertion in the labor market and the professional performance of graduates of the Integrated Curriculum of the Nursing Course of the State University of Londrina.

METHOD

The present study was partially extracted from a Master's thesis entitled "*Professional performance of nurses graduated from the Integrated Curriculum Program of a public university in the north of Parana",* defended in June 2012.

This is a descriptive, exploratory study with a quantitative approach developed at UEL, located in the north of the State of Parana. This institution offers the Undergraduate Nursing Course and four other courses in the area of health, linked to the Health Sciences Center.

The choice of respondents occurred by intentional sampling. The selected participants had enrolled in the UEL Nursing Course in 2005 (Class 53) and 2006 (Class 54) and graduated in 2008 and 2009, with a total of 115 former students.

They represent the first and the second classes after the curricular reformulation of the pedagogical project of the Integrated Curriculum Program, which introduced a two-dimensional evaluation in 2005, characterized by the abdication of grades (numerical concept) and adoption of the nominal concept (achieved or not) regarding the competencies and skills to be achieved in each module.

There were 27 (23.5%) losses related to subjects who did not respond to the questionnaire in the determined period.

Graduates who failed or did not graduate with their respective initial classes were excluded.

In order to locate graduates, the following data from the former students were requested to the Undergraduation Pro-Rectory and to the Coordination of the UEL Nursing Course Collegiate: full name, graduation year, telephone number (landline/cell phone) and electronic address.

After obtaining this information, the first contact with the graduate student was made by electronic mail, in order to present the research project, explain the objectives and invite him to participate in the study through the online questionnaire.

In order to build the data collection tool in the electronic version, the researcher signed up for Google Docs (a Google application package for storing files) and later elaborated the questionnaire, consisting of three parts: identification, professional performance and strengths and weaknesses of training for professional practice.

The variables on the identification included gender, age, marital status, training time, place and area of work of the participants. Regarding the professional performance, the graduates were questioned about professional history, type of employment, activity developed in the employment and value of the monthly income. Related to the strengths and weaknesses of training for professional practice, the questions addressed the insertion and performance in the labor market.

For pre-test purposes, the questionnaire was sent to five graduates from previous class (2003 and 2004) from the same institution. There was no suggestion of changes. Thus, data collection occurred between July and October 2011.

At all times, the ethical precepts provided for in Resolution No. 196/96 ruling human research were respected. Therefore, before responding to the questionnaire, the participant should indicate their acceptance, by responding to the item that included the Free and Informed Consent Form.

After data collection, the treatment of the information was started, through the Excel 2010 program, in order to calculate the absolute and relative frequencies.

In order to categorize the insertion and professional performance of the graduates in the labor market, the following options were listed: hospital (they worked in the hospital area), collective health (they developed some activity in the Basic Health Unit or in the Family Health Program), education (teaching in vocational, higher education or graduate courses), clinics and outpatient clinics (they worked in clinics or outpatient care), business (representing the different areas of practice, such as home care and acupuncture), areas in expansion (they worked in emergency mobile care service), and high management (they worked in the coordination or management of health institutions).[7]

To analyze the issue of confidence in the first job, the four pillars that underpin education were used: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together.[8]

The research project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the State University of Londrina and obtained a favorable opinion No. 003/2011 and CAAE no. 0010.0.268.000-11.

RESULTS

♦ Socio-demographic profile of nursing graduates

Of the 115 graduates, 88 (76.5%) answered the questionnaire. Of these, 42 (47.7%) graduated in 2008 and 46 (52.3%) in 2009.

Outlining the profile of the graduates is essential to know the participants of this study, as well as their peculiarities. In this sense, it was observed that 78 (88.6%) were female and ten (11.4%) were male. The predominant age group ranged from 23 to 32 years, represented by 81 (92.1%) participants, with a mean age of 27 years. In relation to marital status, 64 (72.7%) were single, 22 (25.0%) had a stable marital relationship and two (2.3%) were separated/divorced.

In relation to the place of residence after graduation, 51 (58.0%) graduates lived in Londrina, 21 (23.9%) in other municipalities of the State of Parana, 12 (13.6%) in cities in the State of Sao Paulo Paulo, another four (4.5%) lived in Rio de Janeiro, Recife, Rio Grande do Sul and New York.

♦ Insertion and professional performance of graduates

Of the 88 graduates, 76 (86.4%) had already entered the labor market on one occasion. At the time of data collection, 70 (79.5%) practiced the profession.

Regarding the insertion in the labor market, it was verified that the majority of the graduates started to work in less than a year after the graduation.

Regarding the fields of professional activity, the data revealed the insertion and professional performance of the graduates in the labor market, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Insertion and professional performance of graduates of the UEL Undergraduate Nursing Course in the labor market.Londrina (PR), Brazil, 2012.

Fields of Practice	First job		Current job	
	n=88	%	n=*93	%
Hospital	53	60.2	52	55.9
Collective Health	13	14.8	12	12.9
Education	5	5.7	4	4.3
Clinics and outpatient clinics	2	2.3	4	4.3
Business	2	2.3	1	1.1
Areas in expansion	1	1.1	1	1.1
High Management	-	-	1	1.1
Not working as a nurse	12	13.6	18	19.3

* Five graduates had more than one employment relationship.

When comparing the data of the first job in relation to the job they had at the time of the research, there was a decrease of former students working in the profession, as two (2.7%) respondents were unemployed, two (2.7%) graduates have left their jobs to undertake Master's degree courses, and two (2.7%) former students were working in another professional field.

It was identified that, of the 76 graduates who entered the labor market, 26 (34.2%) started the professional activity through residency courses, of which 22 (84.6%) worked in the hospital field and four (15.4%) in collective health field. Of the total of resident graduates, at the time of data collection 14 (51.9%) respondents had completed the course. It was also verified that one (1.1%) subject was inserted in the hospital field and, later, he chose to join the hospital residency course.

Among the former students who were active in the profession, 65 (92.9%) were linked to one job and five (7.1%) had two jobs.

In relation to the 18 (20.5%) graduates who were not practicing the profession at the time of data collection, five (27.8%) underwent a Master's degree course; nine (50.0%) reported difficulty in finding employment and mentioned that the labor market seeks professionals with registered experience; two (11.2%) said they were civil servants of the State of Parana in another type of service; one (5.5%) was waiting to be officially called for public service and one (5.5%) was experiencing maternity.

The form of the insertion of the former students in the labor market was classified in the following modalities: temporary, permanent, indication and autonomous service. Temporary employment comprises the services in which the employer determines the length of time the employee stays in the company; in the permanent modality, the professional takes a position through a public tender; indication is when a subject already employed in a company indicates another individual and autonomous service is related to independent work, without link to any service or company.

Of the 76 (86.4%) respondents, 57 (75.0%) obtained their first job through temporary employment, 15 (19.8%) through permanent employment, two (2.6%) through indication and two (2.6%) as autonomous. When comparing the stage of insertion in the labor market with the employment in the research period, 42 (56.0%) were in the same service, 12 (16.0%) were approved in a public tender with permanent contract and 16 (20.0%) changed of company with temporary contract.

Considering the possibility of multiple choice regarding the predominant professional activity they performed at the place of work, 57 (81.4%) of the graduates reported it was related to care, 39 (55.7%) to administration/management, eleven (15.7%) related to research and ten (14.3%) related to teaching.

Taking as an indicator the minimum wage in Brazil in 2011 - R$ 545.00 (five hundred and forty-five reais)[9], it was verified that the monthly income of 27 (38.6%) graduates working in the profession was four minimum wages, followed by 17 (24.3%) with six minimum wages, 11 (15.7%) with five minimum wages, five (7.1%) with up to three minimum wages and one (1.4%) egress earned up to two minimum wages. There were nine (12.9%) respondents with income above seven minimum wages.

♦ Facilities and difficulties to obtain the first job

When the graduates were asked whether the training received had contributed to the conquest of the first job, 69 (78.4%) respondents said yes.

Positive points were grouped and described, encompassing the following aspects: social recognition of the higher education institution or of the Integrated Curriculum, development of personal and professional skills, methodological and pedagogical principles and preparation for the selection process.

The social recognition of UEL was indicated by seven (10.1%) graduates, while the Integrated Curriculum was mentioned by four (5.8%) former students. Regarding the development of personal and professional skills, 36 (52.2%) respondents highlighted the proactive stance in the search for knowledge, communication, autonomy and critical and clinical reasoning. With regard to methodological and pedagogical principles, 53 (76.8%) participants highlighted the relationship between theory and practice, theoretical knowledge, an expanded view of scientific-based care, practice and internship, teamwork and teaching methodology. The preparation for the selection process was reported by 38 (55.1%) graduates, who mentioned the possibility of building a good professional curriculum, quality performance and being approved in public examinations and selective tests.

The justifications for the 19 respondents who did not believe that the Integrated Curriculum had helped them to obtain the first job were described by five (5.7%) graduates when they mentioned that the higher education institution was unknown by the employers and in other regions from the country; two (2.2%) respondents reported that the residency helped them to obtain the first job; five (5.7%) nurses mentioned having been approved in a public tender or started their professional life by indication. In this question, seven (8.0%) graduated mentioned they were not working in the nursing field at the moment of data collection.

♦ Confidence to work on the first job

Regarding confidence to work in the first job, 57 (64.8%) individuals answered that they felt confident with the training received through the Integrated Curriculum.

The grouping and the analysis of the justifications to this question showed that 37 (64.9%) former students mentioned that the Integrated Curriculum enabled the learning to know, highlighting the acquired knowledge, the learning and the construction of knowledge. For 35 (61.4%) participants, the learning to do was described in performing the practice and internship. The learning to be was the focus for 22 (35.1%) respondents, who explained the development of the expanded vision of the profession, the autonomy, the search for knowledge, the problem-solving and the feeling of ability to work in the profession. The learning to live together was, for one (1.8%) individual, described by the fact of knowing and being recognized by the service team.

For the 31 students who did not feel confident in their first job, eleven (12.4%) participants described the distance between learned practice and professional practice; seven (8.0%) reported personal difficulties due to lack of specific knowledge and confidence to take the lead of a team; three (3.4%) former students described lack of professional experience and problems in training (reduced internship time). In this question, seven (8.0%) graduates reported not working in the area at the time of data collection.

DISCUSSION

The predominance of females in the nursing field corresponds to a historical characteristic of the profession. The number of women in some professions today is higher than that of men, which is reflected in the case of the nursing team. In parallel, there is a larger contingent of men entering in nursing.[10]

With regard to age, it was verified that the great majority of the graduates were young people (23 to 32 years). These are part of the so-called Generation Y, which stands out for their ease with technological and digital management, used to changes and appreciating diversity.[11] However, it is important to note that the sample consisted of seven (7.9%) respondents aged between 33 and 63 years, who had already worked in the nursing team during graduation and sought professional qualification.

In this sense, a study carried out in Minas Gerais with nurses requiring provisional primary enrollment in the Regional Nursing Council pointed out that 83.5% of the professionals were women and that 74.6% were under 30 years old, evidencing a significant number of young people entering the labor market.[12]

In relation to the marital status of the graduates, a survey of 37 graduates of a public university in Foz do Iguacu (PR) corroborates with these findings by showing that 21 (56.7%) subjects were single, 14 (37.8%) were married and two (5.4%) were in stable union.[13]

Young people (both genders) are more concerned with their professional careers and with financial independence, different from recent decades, when couples joined earlier.[14]

Regarding the geographical distribution of the former students, a recent research shows that, of all the states of the country that have nursing graduations, Parana graduates 87.3% for itself.[15] Regarding the findings, this information can be linked to the economic

development of the municipality, the strong insertion of the university in the community and the influence of the course in the local labor market.

Knowing how the graduates are entering the world of work is extremely valuable, given that it can enable teachers to reflect on the pedagogical project of the course and on the profile of the nurse to be trained.

As observed, the field with greater employability when starting the professional career was the hospital, followed by the fields of collective and educational health. Corroborating with the findings, a study conducted at the School of Nursing of the University of Sao Paulo with a sample of 154 former students in a population of 175 graduates showed that 89 (57.79%) graduates were enrolled in the hospital field, 23 (14.94%) in the Family Health Program and 17 (11.04%) in higher education. Another data compatible with the research is that 109 (70.8%) graduates had only one employment relationship. In this sense, the majority of the population studied was inserted in the labor market,[16] in agreement with the data obtained in this study of professional performance.

The significant number of graduates and the increase in residency courses have encouraged newly trained professionals to continue studying before or during their insertion in the labor market, aiming at a better qualification and financial stability.

A research carried out in Parana shows that 80.1% of the nurses had carried out graduate courses. Among these, 72.1% had done specialization, 14.8% Master's degree and 5.5% PhD degree.[15]

Regarding the modality of entry into the labor market, some graduates started with approval in a state and municipal public tender, ensuring the receipt of higher salaries.

Also, it is important to note that in Londrina, the city of the studied course, and throughout Parana State, there are many higher education institutions that offer the Undergraduate Nursing Course, which makes the insertion of these people in the labor market more competitive. Because there is an expressive number of nurses, most of the health institutions in this municipality fill their job openings through a selective process. Some hospitals even adopt a hierarchical career-ascension plan dividing the nurses into junior, senior, supervisor, and manager, each with a managerial specificity. These establishments generally adopt work policies for a specific period.

In this perspective, a similar research with 45 graduates from Vale do Acarau State University, in Ceara, corroborates the data found in this study, showing that 22 (48.9%) of the former students had temporary employment, followed by 18 (40.0 %) with permanent employment; and five (11.1%) had no employment relationship.[17]

The time elapsed since graduation can ensure personal maturity, acquisition and reinforcement of knowledge in their practices. In this study, it was possible to verify that a great part of the graduates remained in the same job for one to two years, which was considered pertinent to the survey proposed by the research.

With regard to the increase in the number of professionals who were not working at the time of the research, there are some factors that allow for professional avoidance, which are connected and derive from the historical, social, economic, cultural and scientific period of the individual.[18] Another study also points out that the strongest reasons are: low pay (20%), better opportunities in other areas (20%) and family problems (15%).[19]

Among the essential functions for the exercise of the profession, the nurse must perform care, management, educational and research actions. In order for the egress to deepen in each one of them, it is necessary that, even during training, the student is inserted into the labor market and develops skills and competences during the teaching/learning process, becoming a critical, reflexive and creative being in the experienced situations.[20]

In a health institution, the nurse is responsible for the assistance offered to the patient, performing managerial and care functions. The organization of these roles is complex and involves a range of knowledge and technology, which professionals must master.[21]

As an educator and researcher, the nurse becomes a multiplier of information through the rescue of theoretical and practical knowledge. So, it is extremely important that health institutions encourage professionals to develop scientific research in order to promote changes in the work process, helping nursing to consolidate itself as a profession.[22]

Regarding salaries, the data found in this study confirm the findings of a survey conducted in Sobral, Ceara, with 97 nursing graduates in 2010, showing that 56 (57.8%) newly trained nurses received from three to four minimum wages, 29 (28.9%) had income of four to six minimum wages and 12 (13.3%) earned more than six minimum wages.[23]

Comparing this aspect, it is positive that 43 (61.4%) former students from the Undergraduate Nursing Course of the UEL who practiced the profession received earnings above three minimum wages, even with little professional time. It should be noted that a large part of the graduates had been employed in through the accomplishment of a state public tender in 2009, which ensured the receipt of higher salaries.

It was verified in this research that the great majority of the graduates mentioned the training received by the Integrated Curriculum as an aid in the conquest of the first job.

The design of the Integrated Curriculum focuses on the methodology of questioning and meaningful learning, making the student develop skills and competences during the four years of the course, allowing them to solve daily problems by the constant interrelationship between theory and practice.[5]

Corroborating the pedagogical project, a research mentions that the theoretical foundation, the integration between theory and practice, the extracurricular internships and the development of the egress student as a critical, reflexive and autonomous individual on the knowledge prepare the future professional to exercise the profession according to the profile ruled by the undergraduate nursing course of UEL.[24]

Another study in this same subject indicates that the personal commitment before, during and after graduation and the fact of having studied in a renowned university are facilitating factors for the conquest of the first job, because, in the view of the employer, these are strong signals of the acquisition of positively differentiated skills.[25]

With regard to confidence to work in the first job, it was found that many consider the training by the Integrated Curriculum as a decisive factor. It was verified, however, that many graduates have difficulty in integrating the knowledge obtained in the university with the professional practice, especially when it differs from the experienced reality. Over time, they feel more confident, as they develop and improve their practice and advance in personal and professional maturity.

The professional inexperience, associated with situations of prejudices experienced when the newly formed enters in the labor market, creates obstacles that require overcoming and which stimulate the motivation to stand professionally. Such circumstances can be overcome when the egress demonstrates their competence and their knowledge based on practical experience.[24] In this sense, undergraduate training must deal with social issues with their students, developing critical and reflective thinking, enabling the academic to reflect both on the lived reality and on the reality of the work process in which they are inserted.[26] Data from a research show that the knowledge acquired during professional practice is rich in daily situations of the service, marked by confrontation with the unknown.[24]

CONCLUSION

The graduates of the Integrated Curriculum of the UEL Undergraduate Nursing Course, from 2008 and 2009, were predominantly female, single and had a mean age of 27 years. For most of them, the first job was obtained in the hospital field, in a temporary contract, with the monthly income consisting of four minimum salaries. The care activity was considered prevailing in this group.

They considered the training by the Integrated Curriculum as an aid factor in the conquest of the first job, as well as in the confident attitude since the beginning of the professional life due to the development of personal skills and the principles outlined in the curricular proposal.

Therefore, knowing the insertion of the graduates in the labor market allows a conscious reflection of the role of the academia in the training of professionals, stimulating the re-doing of the teaching-learning process in order to reach the desired profile of the nurse before the real needs of health care.

FINANCING

Coordination of Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (CAPES).

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