

A nutrition student in National Food and Nutritional Security

Dear Editors of Journal DEMETRA: *Alimentação, Nutrição & Saúde*/ Food, Nutrition & Health magazine:

I am addressing the editors of journal DEMETRA to request the publication of my report about my experience during the curricular internship at the Nutrition course at the University of Brasília. I chose this journal as suggested by my internship supervisor, Elisabetta Recine, Professor in the Department of Nutrition at the University of Brasília.

Through this report, I hope to be able to talk about what has made me see Nutrition in a different light and, thus, define public health as my area of expertise as a professional. Then, I will be able to contribute to students by making them acquainted with and experience a new approach to nutrition.

Here is my personal account:

“If I could sum up 2012 in one word, that word would be *rebuilding*. For a number of reasons, the past year has made me see my professional life in a different light - perhaps the perspective that I had been seeking since the day I started going to university.

When I chose “Nutrition” in the university entrance exam, I was not sure what to expect. I remember I was in doubt between two or three courses - most of them in the field of humanities. In fact, I still did not feel ready to make such an important decision like that, and I did not know anyone who was studying Nutrition as their undergraduate degree or future profession. But I was sure about one thing: I wanted to help people. I needed to help them somehow. And Nutrition, as the course in the field of health, seemed the most feasible path.

In the second half of 2012, the National Council for Food and Nutrition Security (CONSEA)” appeared “ in my life. In the last step of the Nutrition course at the University of Brasilia (UNB), you have to choose an area to perform the last curricular internship, an additional training internship, usually the one you are most familiar with – as far as I am concerned, the area of Social Nutrition. Among the alternatives of the internship sites, there was CONSEA. It is difficult to explain the reasons why I choose this place ... In fact, prior to the meeting for deciding the sites where each student would accomplish their internship, I had already decided where to go. CONSEAs ppeared at that moment as a new alternative , different from what I had been offered in previous semesters. For some reason, right there I made a new decision without hesitation. I wanted to go to CONSEA. I did not know if this would be the best internship for me. I did not know if I was prepared for this role. In my mind, it had to be the CONSEA. And so it was.

On September 13, 2012, I walked into CONSEA for the first time. And since then my internship began - and my transformation.

At first, the only desire I felt was leaving that place as soon as possible. Firstly, because my initial role was, basically, to read policies, plans, reports. And, secondly, because I attended my first event inside CONSEA: The Bureau of Controversies on Pesticides - and suddenly, everything I had been learning in college began to be challenged.

The feeling I had in the early months of my internship was that more than half of what I had learned during the years in college actually did not make much sense - there was still a lot of factors behind every question that was addressed (and I think the professors were forgetting to tell me this part of the story).

I could not understand, for example, why we should spend all that time in college learning to encourage my clients / patients to eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, while Brazil was the largest consumer of pesticides in the world. By encouraging this consumption, was I going to promote health or put these people's health at risk? And this was just one of the points that I was questioning.

Who am I? Who do I want to be, anyway? Am I professionally happy? What do I know about my profession? What do I really want to do with Nutrition? Do I seek to do what I really want? What can Nutrition really teach me? Am I where I want to be? After all, why Nutrition? Why am I asking all this now? Why was all I knew about nutrition suddenly making me so confused?

After months of reflection, I finally understood. By working at CONSEA, I was exactly where I wanted to be. Being exactly where I wanted to be was right what made me scared. When working at CONSEA, I finally achieved what I really wanted. And eventually getting what I really wanted caused my own despair. Maybe because I always - or for some time - used to being where I did not want to be ... And therefore I had been feeling so professionally incomplete.

That was my rebuilding process! This sound far-fetched, but for the first time I felt I could see my life in perspective. As it really is. As it really should be seen. As I really felt like seeing it. Anyway, everything was starting to become clear ... And I'm not only talking about Nutrition. I am talking about Social Nutrition. About society. Health. About life in general.

I dare not say I am transformed. I dare say I have changed, but I still feel like I am in a transformation processes ... And CONSEA has a large share of "fault" in this process for giving me the opportunity to keep in constant transformation, working with the public and with the tools that I have always wanted to work in the end.

When I look in the mirror today, I wonder why it took me so long to understand all this. I compare dates and realize that while a large conference was happening about issues associated with hunger and poverty, I was home, working on the computer or out running an errand, discussing meaningless issues - and, in most cases, feeling empty . Today I know what is happening in the world and in my country. Now I know where to find texts to update my knowledge on the issues that really interest me and that really matter. Today I know what the programs and policies that are, in fact, interesting and effective. Today, on a regular basis, I deal with people who know and discuss controversial political issues. Today I can tell what a public officer is, what a social movement is, what a plenary is. Today I learned to ask focused questions. All things considered, today I feel much closer to the person I really want to be.

CONSEA was my big step. It was my great start. My experience at CONSEA encouraged me as if I had been told: "You can do it. You can actually do what you want to do. You can really be who you want to be. Believe in yourself and move on. Your professional life is just beginning. "

For all these reasons, I have to thank CONSEA for this opportunity. It was more than a training internship. It was a lifetime experience. It was my transformation. It was my discovery process. And above all this, it was the story of my professional achievement.

So I hope that, somehow, I can contribute to the training of new Nutrition professionals, who may seek for different perspectives and ways of working compared with conventional ways, which are consistently stimulated in most universities, so that, finally, is it possible to foster the dissemination of Food Security and Nutrition ideas.

Sincerely,

Bruna dos Santos Nunes

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