

Teaching of nursing history: reflections and contributions

Ensino da história da Enfermagem: reflexões e contribuições

Enseñanza de la historia de la Enfermería: reflexiones y contribuciones

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to think about teaching of the history of nursing history through its contributions to professional training. **Content:** in this theoretical-reflexive study, data was organized by content relating to the subject and discussed on the basis of the objects relating to nursing history, with emphasis on the period post-Florence Nightingale. Two theoretical sections were outlined: teaching of nursing history and contributions to professional training. **Final remarks:** teaching of nursing history was found to be facing mounting challenges. It is hoped to encourage new thinking with a view to contributing towards the critical, thoughtful and emancipatory teaching of nursing history, reflected in a consolidation and strengthening of the profession in society. **Descriptors:** Nursing; History of Nursing; Teaching; Education, Nursing.

RESUMO

Objetivo: refletir acerca do ensino da história de enfermagem mediante suas contribuições para a formação profissional. **Conteúdo:** trata-se de ensaio teórico-reflexivo, cujos dados foram organizados de acordo com os conteúdos relacionados à problemática e discutidos apoiados nos objetos referentes à história da enfermagem, com ênfase no período pós-Florence Nightingale. Delinearam-se duas seções teóricas: ensino da história da enfermagem e contribuições para a formação profissional. **Considerações Finais:** constatou-se que o ensino da história da enfermagem vem enfrentando desafios crescentes. Espera-se fomentar novas reflexões com o intuito de colaborar com o ensino da história da enfermagem de maneira crítica, reflexiva e emancipatória, reverberando na consolidação e fortalecimento da profissão na sociedade. **Descritores:** Enfermagem; História da Enfermagem; Ensino; Educação em Enfermagem.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: reflexionar acerca de la enseñanza de la historia de la enfermería mediante sus contribuciones para la formación profesional. **Contenido:** se trata de un ensayo teórico-reflexivo, cuyos datos fueron organizados según los contenidos relacionados a la problemática y discutidos con base en los objetos referentes a la historia de la enfermería, con énfasis al periodo post-Florence Nightingale. Se delinearon dos secciones teóricas: enseñanza de la historia de la enfermería y contribuciones para la formación profesional. **Consideraciones Finales:** se constató que la enseñanza de la historia de la enfermería ha enfrentado crecientes desafíos. Se espera fomentar nuevas reflexiones con el intuito de colaborar con la enseñanza de la historia de la enfermería de manera crítica, reflexiva y emancipatoria, reverberando en la consolidación y fortalecimiento de la profesión en la sociedad. **Descritores:** Enfermería; Historia de la Enfermería; Enseñanza; Educación en Enfermería.

INTRODUCTION

For a long time it seemed sufficient to understand History as a succession of events characterized by juxtaposition of descriptive and chronological data based on isolated and fragmented views¹. Nowadays, it is necessary to deepen on the reflections related to the text and to the multidimensional context of the historical outline of facts/events and their weights. In this sense, researching to conduct Nursing History teaching is synonymous to investing in the critical and reflective training of professionals for their performance in the social, cultural, political and economic practices.

Raising such aspects is to understand what the past has to teach us in the present, with perspectives into the future². This requires multiple points of view and the repertoire of the person in charge of teaching the academic discipline. To such end and in this knowledge filed, teaching requires critical and reflective thinking to produce a histographic discourse in the classrooms.

From this perspective, problematizing is a synonym to knowing-doing-knowing in Nursing History teaching, with articulation of several versions and interpretations left by traces, vestiges and clues³. Thus, it is in this path that we understand construction of the historical narrative to be taught by those who teach the discipline, with permanent and continuous updates in intellectual productions, in addition to creativity, which requires teaching methodology, especially in the active trend associated with technologies, when knowledge is loose around⁴, and its popularization is the keynote of the 21st century.

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The history of Nursing contributes to understanding its roots, through the path of caring for men and women, in favor of “ensuring life maintenance and retreating death”, in defense of being a profession at the expense of craft⁵. Thus, knowing the historical path of Nursing enables constructing the feeling of professional identity and belonging, as well as the liberation of lagged inheritances⁶. This implies distinguishing the professionals' sociocultural role and reverberate it in society.

It is worth noting that this is but a challenge to teach Nursing History. This challenge manifests itself when an intellectual production process is in the midst of a (re)construction process, by means of historical methods⁷, in the training and qualification programs of the category. Courses and research studies – MSc and PhD – are crucial to such end. This means that we need to know the text, the context and the authorship of those who produced them so that we can escape the scientific mediocrity of the historical, social, cultural, political, educational and gender process⁸, in favor of a discourse by those who experience and undergo the struggles and achievements, beyond development of practices, but rather theorized in the knowledge field.

Given the above, it is considered that Nursing History teaching provides subsidies for the construction of professional identity, in addition to allowing understanding the path of the profession in three axes: history of institutions, biographies and anthropology/culture of care⁹. Thus, the objective is to reflect on Nursing History teaching through its contributions to professional training.

CONTENT

This is a theoretical-reflective essay¹⁰, due to the need to verify some aspects that are of interest for researchers. This happened facing the concerns arising from the participation of Nursing students in the Historical, Anthropological and Cultural Approach to Nursing academic discipline, offered by the Ribeirão Preto Nursing School of *Universidade de São Paulo*.

The material analyzed was retrieved from exploratory searches and presented in a narrative way, based on the description and analysis of the theoretical constructs assimilated.

A bibliographic survey was conducted to achieve the objective. The results were organized according to the contents related to the problem to be discussed, reflexively, in the theme of Nursing History, with emphasis on the post-Florence Nightingale period. This produced an essay with two subtitles: Nursing History teaching and Contributions to professional training.

Nursing History teaching

Caring is an activity as old as humanity, being considered inherent to the human condition¹¹. However, although care is always present, Nursing starts to have its professionalization movement based on the ideas of Florence Nightingale, a woman who stood out when gaining visibility during the Crimean War (1853-1856), becoming known by the pseudonym of Lady of the Lamp, for assisting the sick at night with an oil lamp, as well as for provoking a public health reform in England and the creation of a differentiated educational institution from those existing at the time¹².

The academic discipline on Nursing History is a fundamental curricular unit to understand and appreciate the professional identity. Following this line of thought allows promoting knowledge attitudes and actions beyond the reproduction of the classic ones. On the other hand, it does not mean that they do not have their value; quite the contrary, but there is a need to update the diverse information they offer in the face of the advance of the national and international research studies presented in the 21st century.

In a faithful balance of the scale, the penalty of those who write the historiography of the profession needs to be attentive to the relevant aspects that must be rethought. This leads to the presentation of sociocultural, political and economic arguments, as well as to the verification of the habits and customs of past times, through clues and traces of the past for the new construction of credible versions and interpretations to be adopted. Therefore, Nursing History teaching can train critical, reflective and politicized professionals, in favor of their category and with a feeling of belonging.

The Nursing professionalization movement is a result of the way of teaching in Europe. Countries such as Germany and France had schools/courses aimed at training people for the care profession, for example, the Kaiserswerth Deaconess Headquarters, run by the Fliedner¹³ couple, and the Training School for Nurses and Public Care Nurses, at the Salpêtrière Hospital¹⁴, both in the 19th century.

In England, criticism was directed at people who provided care to sick or in-need individuals without or with limited instruction, which leads us to cite the Sairey Gamp character by writer Charles Dickens. Dickens stereotyped the figure of the female caregiver with several pejorative adjectives, as a way to criticize the aspects inherent to the public health workers in Victorian times¹⁵. With Florence's return from the Crimean War, she invests in the data collected during her

participation in the conflict, which gave rise to the Diagram of the Rose, by evidencing the mortality rates, before and after her interventions with care. This exerted an effect for the implementation of the Health Reform in England and the creation of women's training Nursing school¹⁶.

In Brazil, the movement has been active since 1890, with the Professional School of Nurses, currently the Alfredo Pinto Nursing School in Rio de Janeiro, where the Nursing History subject lacks identification in its curricular matrix.

Another important fact in the Brazilian professionalization movement was the creation of the Samaritan Hospital School of Nurses in São Paulo, with the arrival of English nurses from the institution created by Florence, according to a report dating back to 1903¹⁷. Therefore, it can be considered that the institution was created before the implementation of modern Nursing, through the Anglo-Saxon model, by the School of Nurses of the National Public Health Department, currently Anna Nery Nursing School, in Rio de Janeiro. This latter did include the Nursing History academic discipline in its curricular matrix¹².

It is worth noting that discussions on this theme began in 1917, with the publication of the document entitled *Standard Curriculum Guide*, when recommending the Nursing History teaching during the implementation of modern Nursing, through the Parsons Mission, in the North American paradigm, in 1923¹⁸. Since then, Nursing History teaching in Brazil has been continuously (re)configured over time¹⁹.

Years later, the School of Nurses of the National Health Department was renamed Donna Anna Nery School and became the standard for teaching the profession in Brazil, through decree No. 20,109 of June 15th, 1931²⁰. However, some institutions did not adopt the teaching model, for example, the Professional School of Nurses, and remained in operation until 1949, when the new established order realigned the scenario for nurses' training and preserved the Nursing History teaching. In turn, in 1962 and with the implementation of the minimum curriculum for the Nursing course, the academic discipline was added to Ethics. Subsequently, by including the teaching of Deontology and of the Professional Legislation, another curricular reconfiguration reduced the aspects related to the academic discipline under consideration.

In this perspective, currently, the Nursing History teaching still occurs through traditional approaches, based on content transfer and without reflective emphasis on criticism and creativity.

Another way to teach Nursing History was by including it under a transversal form in other academic disciplines, mainly those referring to Ethics and/or to the Fundamentals. Thus, it leads to treating the discipline in the curriculum matrices in a content-based way, instead of exposing the responsibility it requires as a unit, in fact, a trainer for the professional field.

Resolution No. 573 of January 31st, 2018, which deals with the recommendations of the National Health Council to the proposal of the National Curriculum Guidelines of the Bachelor's Degree in Nursing, includes the Nursing History in the mandatory topic called "Nursing Fundamentals" and recommends, among the competencies of professional development in Nursing, recognizing Nursing as a job and profession, historically determined and with its own identity^{12,21}.

Another point that deserves critical reflection is due to the period during which Nursing History should be taught. A study¹² evidences that the theme is presented to the students at the beginning of the course. However, it is considered that, many times, they are not sufficiently mature to reflect on the nuances that permeate the profession and its social identity, despite the importance of clarifying introductory and historical aspects of the profession early in time. In addition, the minimum and/or fragmented hour load²² is another debatable element, even in the only theoretical field, as if the discipline did not require extensionist practice and/or curricularization.

Furthermore, the teaching strategies applied should be creative and of interest for the students, by means of appealing and dynamic resources and enabling significant learning. The strategies will provide protagonism in favor of knowledge construction, in the sense of action-reflection-action and, consequently, the development of a critical, reflective and emancipatory stance, with a view to meeting all three research axes of research: institutional history, biographies and anthropology/culture of care^{9,23}.

Thus, the Nursing History teaching contributes to the development of social, political, cultural and economic responsibility in favor of identity and professional perception. Thus, it is ratified that it is but a challenge to teach the academic discipline in question, which requires training, qualification and research studies for performance in this field.

Contributions to professional training

Nursing teaching tries to adapt to society's demands and to the health and teaching policies²⁴. Thus, Nursing History teaching and research become relevant when allied. This means that, based on past situations, it allows guiding, arguing, explaining or solving issues of the present, as it generates critical and reflective reasoning²⁵.

The relationship between Nursing and society produces social constructions in terms of concepts, meanings and stereotypes. In this sense, (re)updating is urgent, to the detriment of poetic²⁶ or non-poetic representations, which need to be deconstructed⁸. An example of the above was the representation of heroes broadcast on social and television media, capitalized by the Marvel company in the midst of the coronavirus disease pandemic 2019 (COVID-19) in the year we should celebrate the *Nursing Now* campaign, promoted by the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization, with the support of the Federal Nursing Council¹⁶.

In this logic, the interdisciplinary approach becomes emergent at the expense of isolated views¹², in order to escape from the methodological traps of mere reductionism or redundancies, sometimes circumstantial. On the other hand, the weaknesses of approaches rooted in the academic disciplines with traditional methodologies are acknowledged¹, although it is necessary to reinforce that we are in the 21st century, in the face of major technology, advances in research and internationalization. One must believe in the multidisciplinary and perhaps transdisciplinary perspective to approach and build the historical narrative.

The Nursing History academic discipline is one of the possibilities to favor the discovery of new paths and perspectives targeted at unveiling rights trails. This implies exploring an instigating and revolutionary past full of struggles and achievements, in order to transform, resist and progress in spite of setbacks. The knowledge arising from it offers social, political, economic and cultural intellectuality for expertise and discernment in the decision-making field. This is because the discipline can and should work on methodological aspects of research in history, for example, when, after collecting the information, it should be triangulated²⁷ for the inferences and derivations by the vestiges, traces and clues left by the past as documentary proofs for credible constructions of the historical narrative.

If, on the one hand, the literature²⁸ points out a significant challenge in the teaching of Nursing care based on historical materialism, on the other hand, it should be understood that construction of the historical narrative is plural and that historiographical debates are necessary. Research studies need to be discussed from different perspectives since, eventually, what is done in the present is an invention of the past²⁹, of the traditions³⁰ and of everyday life³¹, considering that the past was there.

Discussing the research studies produced from various perspectives is a synonym to understanding that there is much to be done. However, understanding of the historical development of Nursing allows (un)veil and (re)model the conceptions of care and its interfaces with culture, politics and its own history^{19,32}.

Another aspect that cannot be neglected is the production of sources of the present time for constructing the memory of the profession³³, which is produced at each and every moment: when classes are taught; when didactic-pedagogical materials are applied; when minutes are made; when images are captured by cell phones; when scientific, social and cultural events are held, and at so many other moments, sometimes unimaginable, that historians use for constructing the historical narrative.

The documentary production/sources in some educational, and also, care institutions, are sent to their collections, where they remain dormant/silenced, sometimes for a long time, until they are awakened for analytical interpretations. These sources allow demystifying aspects for the construction of critical thinking. In addition, they raise and express potentialities to understand the sociopolitical stance towards the time of struggles and achievements investigated.

Study limitations

It would have been possible to advance more in this paper; however, there are limitations in terms of standard pages being imposed for publication, as well as the need for synthesis power. This led us to select some analytical elements for the reflective discussion, leaving gaps for further deepening, for example, teaching strategies and contributions; however, for this essay we chose to focus on aspects that are considered relevant, even if arbitrarily.

Contributions to the Nursing and Health practice

It is understood that the contributions enabled by this essay are up to the readers, after their appreciation, but the belief that there was critical reflection on some items of the *praxis* is deposited here. In theory, problematization of this Historical, Anthropological and Cultural Approach of Nursing academic discipline, and perhaps of others, in a tangential and practical way, reflects aspects that the pandemic period imposed on us, with synchronous and asynchronous classes in favor of non-contamination by COVID-19.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study allowed reflecting about Nursing History teaching and its contributions for professional training in the current panorama, based on the constructs evidenced in the literature. It was verified that it faces increasing challenges, from its inclusion in the students' curricular matrix to the types of approaches and the continuous need for contextualization.

The expectation is to foster new reflections and studies, in order to collaborate with the Nursing History teaching in a critical, reflective and emancipatory way in the training spaces, reverberating in consolidation and strengthening of the knowledge area, with an effect of the profession in society.

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