

COMPETÊNCIAS PROFISSIONAIS PARA ENFERMEIROS HOSPITALARES: UMA ANÁLISE DOCUMENTAL

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCIES FOR HOSPITAL NURSES: A DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

COMPETENCIAS PROFESIONALES PARA ENFERMEROS HOSPITALES: UN ANÁLISIS DOCUMENTAL

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Analisar as competências profissionais requeridas para a atuação do enfermeiro hospitalar e aquelas implementadas durante a sua formação acadêmica. **Método:** Estudo documental, qualitativo, tendo como cenário uma instituição hospitalar pública e uma instituição de ensino superior, sendo fontes de evidências documentos legais das referidas instituições, os dados coletados de outubro de 2016 a janeiro de 2017. Foi utilizada a análise temática indutiva dos dados. **Resultados:** Permitiram identificar competências clínicas, como postura profissional e habilidades técnicas e gerenciais, como liderança e comunicação, em ambos os documentos, sendo algumas implementadas na formação acadêmica, porém não exigidas pela organização hospitalar, outras requeridas apenas pelo hospital e não desenvolvidas na formação acadêmica e, finalmente, algumas presentes nas duas instituições. **Conclusões:** Evidenciaram-se similaridades entre o requerido em uma instituição hospitalar e o ensinado na graduação, porém há a necessidade de centros formadores e gestores quanto a implementar estratégias para o desenvolvimento de competências clínicas e gerenciais.

Descritores: Enfermeiros; Competência Profissional; Educação Superior; Hospitais; Estratégias.

ABSTRACT

Objective: To analyze the professional competencies required for the performance of hospital nurses and those implemented during their academic training. **Method:** Documentary-qualitative study; the scenarios were a public hospital institution and a higher education institution. The legal documents of those institutions were used as sources of evidence, whose data was collected from October 2016 to January 2017. Thematic inductive analysis was applied to the data. **Results:** The study allowed identifying clinical competencies such as professional attitude and technical and managerial competencies such as leadership and communication in both documents. Some competencies were implemented in academic training, but not required by the hospital organization; others, however, were required only by the hospital and not developed during training. Finally, some competencies were present in both institutions. **Conclusions:** Similarities were evidenced between the competencies required in the hospital and those taught in academic training. Nevertheless, there is a need for training centers and managers to implement strategies for the development of clinical and managerial competencies.

Descriptors: Nurses; Professional Competence; College education; Hospitals. Strategies.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Analizar las competencias profesionales requeridas para la actuación del enfermero hospitalario y aquellas implementadas durante su formación académica. **Método:** Estudio documental, cualitativo, siendo los escenarios, una institución hospitalaria pública y una institución de enseñanza superior, teniendo como fuentes de evidencias documentos legales de dichas instituciones, siendo los datos recolectados de octubre de 2016 a enero de 2017. Se utilizó análisis temático inductivo de los datos. **Resultados:** Permitieron identificar competencias clínicas, como postura profesional y habilidades técnicas, y gerenciales como liderazgo y comunicación, en ambos documentos, siendo algunas implementadas en la formación académica, pero no exigidas por la organización hospitalaria, otras requeridas sólo por el hospital y no desarrolladas en la formación académica y finalmente algunas presentes en las dos instituciones. **Conclusiones:** Se evidenciaron semejanzas entre lo requerido en una institución hospitalaria y el enseñado en la graduación, pero hay la necesidad que centros formadores y gestores implementen estrategias para el desarrollo de competencias clínicas y gerenciales.

Descriptores: Enfermeros; Competencia Profesional; Educación Superior; Hospitales; Estrategias.

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Como citar este artigo:

Leal LA, Soares MI, Silva BR, et al. Competências Profissionais para Enfermeiros Hospitalares: Uma Análise Documental. Revista de Enfermagem do Centro Oeste Mineiro. 2019;9: e3249. [Access_____]; Available in:_____. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.19175/recom.v9i0.3249>

INTRODUCTION

The transformations that occur in the world of work due to technological innovation and its forms of organization have called for the need to implement professional training models and workforce management based on professional competencies. In the health sector, as a consequence of these changes, institutions constantly need to update their practices, requiring workers with a differentiated profile and specific competencies to a given task, facilitating adaptation to the demands of the labor market⁽¹⁾, which is no different in hospital organizations.

In this context, professional competencies represent a set of knowledge, abilities and attitudes that each worker has and that corresponds to the benchmark for construction of his development in the company⁽²⁾.

Professional competence is not a recent theme; it has been addressed in recent years in the area of health and is a reason for concern of service managers and training centers during qualification of their professionals. In this regard, the National Curricular Guidelines (NCG) have instituted an academic and professional profile in health care courses that include the following competencies: Health Care; Decision making; Communication; Leadership; Administration and Management; and Continuing Education⁽³⁾.

Specifically in nursing, the NCGs present professional competencies as fundamental aspects in the design of the pedagogical projects of the courses, guiding the training of nurses. It should be considered that, in the care environment, management and care are articulated at all moments. Thus, teaching based on both managerial and clinical competencies (the latter related to direct care) acts as a strategy for the transformations occurred particularly in hospital services⁽³⁾.

Thus, some researchers have identified the mandatory competencies for hospital nurses, identifying them as clinical competencies, grouped into seven domains: the role of help provider; teaching and training; diagnosis and monitoring; effective management of rapidly changing situations; administration and monitoring of therapeutic regimens and interventions, as well as monitoring and guarantee of quality of health practices⁽⁴⁻⁵⁾.

On the other hand, managerial competencies can be attributed to intrinsic abilities to nursing management, such as:

decision making that corresponds to the training of future professionals in order to evaluate, systematize and decide on procedures; communication to interact with others; and leadership in multiprofessional teamwork and management of the workforce, physical and material resources, and information. Still, authors point out that training concerning nursing management competencies must happen since undergraduate training and in a continuous ways afterwards in hospital services⁽⁶⁾.

As a complex health organizations, hospitals have been affected both by changes in the labor market and by the training of professionals who work in it. The technological impact associated with the insertion of the necessary knowledge for the exercise of the different health professions requires that professionals of this area, and specially nursing professionals, have an adaptive profile so that by assuming new roles depending on the demands, they mobilize the necessary competencies to the professional praxis⁽⁷⁾. In this sense, in an attempt to meet its needs, hospital organizations have sought to define competence profiles for its workers.

From this point of view, competencies are expected from newly graduated nurses in order to perform hospital care, namely: effective communication and documentation skills; teamwork and multidisciplinary work; knowledge; ability to handle and lead people; supervision; handling of informatics and technology, among others. In addition, researchers point to the need for nursing programs and/or courses to improve professional competencies during undergraduate training to serve as an example for future learning and practice⁽⁸⁾.

Therefore, it can be affirmed that the professional competencies required for nursing graduates can be initially acquired through undergraduate and postgraduate training, and there is a need for investments in the training of nurses that are essential to their professional practice⁽⁹⁾.

One of the pillars of nurses' competencies in care provision, however, involves the management of the work process. Thus, nursing training centers have the role of preparing future nurses to develop not only regarding clinical competencies, those related to the practice and work techniques, but also managerial competencies, which must be improved by means of specific theoretical and practical disciplines for

this area of activity, because when nurses enter complex environments of care such as hospitals, they will be prepared to face their daily work in an effective way according to what is expected by the organization.

In this sense, this study presents the questions: What clinical and managerial competencies are established to nursing professionals in a hospital institution of public education? What types of competencies are offered in the undergraduate education of a Public Higher Education Institution (HEI), in particular in the area of hospital nursing management?

Regarding the relevance of this subject, this research should enable hospital managers to rethink the essential competences that can guide the professional practice of nurses. The study will also enable nursing training centers to reflect on potential knowledge gaps, competencies, and attitudes in their curricula and the need to develop pedagogical strategies that favor the acquisition of training that is appropriate to the needs of organizations, with the improvement of new competencies.

This study had the objective of analyzing the professional competencies required for the performance of hospital nurses and those implemented during their academic training.

METHODS

This is an exploratory, documentary, retrospective study with qualitative approach to data. The study scenario was an HEI and a hospital institution in a city in the countryside of São Paulo. The HEI is a Public Faculty of Nursing that offers two types of Courses: "Bachelor" and "Bachelor and Licentiate" degree. The public hospital is a level IV teaching hospital with higher technological density, covering transplant care, and has a partnership with the chosen HEI, offering several training courses to students who work in it.

The research considered two sources of evidence: the legal documents of the hospital institution and the programs of the courses of the selected HEI, from the area of hospital nursing administration. The data were collected from October 2016 to January 2017. It is noteworthy

that the documents of the hospital were provided as a form filled out by the researcher and delivered to the Human Resources department of the institution. The documents selected were the calls for public examinations for the post of nurse in the last 10 years, that is, the selection processes that occurred in 2007, 2011 and 2014, which were the only records that included the professional competencies required for the position.

In relation to the HEI, the programs of the subjects of the area of hospital nursing administration offered in the third and fourth years of graduation were selected; these programs describe several competencies, among them, clinical and management competencies that can be improved and used by the students during the immersion. The programs were obtained via Internet, in the website of the selected HEI. It should be noted that the programs published on the website in the year 2016 were selected, whose version was the most updated of the curriculum matrix.

Thematic analysis was chosen to analyze the data analysis. This technique identifies, analyzes, and reports the patterns (themes) pertaining to the data, providing a detailed organization and description of the data set. Through its theoretical freedom, thematic analysis provides a useful and flexible research tool that can potentially provide a rich, detailed and complex account⁽¹⁰⁾.

This study was developed in accordance with Resolution 466/2012 of the NHC and was approved by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of the proposing institution, according to official letter nº 241/2016, CAAE 57129716.0.0000.5393.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The reading and analysis of the documents of the hospital institution elucidated several clinical and management competencies required for nurses in their work process, which are considered essential competencies for them to carry out their service effectively in the hospital context, as presented in the Box 1.

Box 1 - Synthesis of the management and clinical competencies of the public notices of a teaching hospital in the countryside of São Paulo, Brazil, 2017.

Public notices of a Teaching Hospital Institution	Management Competencies	Clinical Competencies
Public notice 2007	-Management of materials, personnel, and costs of the hospitalization environment. - Supervision of nursing work – Continuing education to the work team.	- Admission of patients in the unit and provision of guidance to patients regarding institutional regulations. - Provision of direct care to patients, making daily visits for updating about their needs. - Confirmation of the census of the hospitalization unit; preparation and accompaniment of patients on special exams; record of occurrences in service. - Performance of technical nursing procedures. -Correct and accurate registration of nursing records. - Use of ethics and politics in attendance. - Realization of the nursing process and Nursing Care Systematization of.
Public notice 2011	Previous list plus: Collaboration/participation in the development of scientific research.	Previous list plus: -Assume and exchange duty properly.
Public notice 2014	Previous list plus: -Professional updating.	Previous list plus: Execution of related tasks that are assigned by the head of the unit.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

On the other hand, the analysis of the documents of the HEI was based on the selection of Programs of four subjects of the year 2016, which develop and approach management and

clinical competencies, being two theoretical and two theoretical-practical subjects belonging to the area of hospital nursing administration, as shown in Box 2.

Box 2 - Synthesis of the management and clinical competencies of programs of undergraduate nursing courses at a Public HEI in the countryside of São Paulo, Brazil, 2017.

Programs of the subjects of the Public Higher Education Institution	Management Competencies	Clinical Competencies
Theoretical subjects: Subject 1 (Bachelor degree) Subject 2 (Bachelor degree)	- Communication. - Leadership. - Teamwork. - Decision-making.	- Learning of attitudinal knowledge such as posture, reflection, provision of care with ethics and empowerment.
Theoretical-practical subjects: Subject 3 (Bachelor degree) Subject 4 (Bachelor and licentiate degrees).	- Supervision and leadership in Nursing; - Management of the hospitalization unit; - Management of resources, materials, personnel, and costs; - Labor Relations and Ethics.	- Knowledge of patients admitted to the clinic with identification and intervention in health needs. - Improvement of competencies for nursing interventions. - Development of nursing records. - Development of a proactive attitude for the management of nursing care. - Insertion and integration of the student into the work group. Demonstration of ethical attitudes in nursing care management. - Therapeutic relationship in the approach with the client and family and team.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Theoretical subjects were identified as: "Subject 1", offered in the Bachelor of Nursing course and "Subject 2", offered in the Bachelor

and Licentiate of Nursing course, both of which presented similarities in their contents, with differences only in the teaching method and

workload. The theoretical-practical subjects were identified as "Subject 3", offered in the Bachelor of Nursing course, and "Subject 4" offered in the Bachelor and Licentiate of Nursing course, both of which present curricular matrices with the same content and similar learning proposals. All subjects, in general, focused on the development of activities of undergraduates for future nursing professionals in the hospital environment, focused on the management of the care and the team, as well as on the articulation between management and care activities, in the practice of nurses, inseparable bases that guide the work of these professionals.

In the analysis of the Programs of the subjects, it was observed that the proposed theoretical content to the Bachelor Course, with a 75-hour workload, focused on the development of dispersion activities, in which students identified the reality of management practice through discussions, in conversation wheels and periods of concentration, which consist in the theorization of nursing management, and the students assume roles of coordinator and rapporteur of activities, favoring the experience of teamwork.

For the Bachelor and Licentiate Course, the only difference is the workload, which is of 60 hours, that is, 15 hours less than that of the Bachelor course. The teaching proposal is similar to the described above and uses the pedagogy of problematization as teaching-learning strategy. Both subjects adopt the participation in discussions and written tests as evaluation method.

The theoretical and practical subjects of the two courses present a 120-hour workload, which equip the students to assume the management role of nursing care and of the hospitalization unit, recognizing themselves as agents of this process and coordinating the work of the nursing team.

Thus, the subjects aim to develop clinical competencies such as technical and management improvement, namely: planning, decision-making, supervision, computerization, and work relations with a view to promoting quality and humanization of care in the perspective of expanded clinic.

Considering that, in the hospital context, nurses play a relevant role in the health team, this study focused on the professional competencies of these workers. In this context, it is believed that the professionals' performance is

directly related to their academic training and, in this sense, the latter should cover a range of competencies, i.e., knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to meet the current health demands.

It should be stressed that, as future nurses, students need to have their critical thinking stimulated, thinking and rethinking the management of personnel, environment and actions for the main goal of their profession, which is the care to be achieved⁽¹¹⁾.

Thus, the analysis of the documents allowed verifying that some competencies had correspondence; what was required in the hospital institution, was addressed in the HEI. In this respect, we have the clinical competencies, such as: use of ethics or attitudes in the services rendered; direct patient care in relation to procedures/techniques; and application of theoretical-practical knowledge.

With regard to the common clinical competencies mentioned, the professional attitude stood out. It was considered as a fundamental competence for nurses. The researchers considered it essential that nursing professionals demonstrate attitude and empathy, with a focus on the environment, assiduity, and flexibility in the working environment⁽¹²⁾.

In this perspective, technical procedures and direct care to patients such as physical examinations and specific procedural skills of nurse stood out as essential competencies for the excellence of the nursing care, which are often learned during undergraduate training and enhanced with the practice in the professional experience.

With regard to this premise, insufficient professional experience is one of the most perceived challenges for newly graduated professionals in the hospital sector⁽¹³⁾. Thus, it is up to the HEI to reflect and provide appropriate learning environments and strategies so that students can develop greater technical skills and enter the market with sufficient preparation for patient care.

However, the HEI must not only prepare students in the technical sense, but also ensure that the theoretical knowledge transmitted be incorporated and used in the practice of future work, providing students with clinical reasoning and sharpened critical thinking for nursing activities in order to guarantee the excellence of quality in care. Thus, the data of this study evidenced the clinical competence "theoretical-

practical knowledge" as essential to substantiate a quality professional praxis.

In this sense, one of the ways in which this competence is developed and improved in the undergraduate environment is by developing and improving it during the internship. The immersion in the practical scenario of practice allows the development of technical competencies and the improvement of knowledge built on theoretical bases. Thus, in order for the internship to fulfill its role, it is necessary the presence of a professional of the institution with training or professional experience in the area of knowledge developed in order to guide and supervise the student in the field⁽¹⁴⁾.

It is observed that supervisors in the internship plays an extremely important role in the professional training of the student because they will be the principal and, most of the times, the first responsible for sharing experiences and articulating knowledge and practice.

Another major group of competencies identified as essential for the post of nurse in a hospital and taught at the HEI was management competencies, among them, management of personnel, materials, costs, and supervision. They stand out as management competencies vital to the active work process in the hospital environment. Managing personnel and material resources is associated with the coordination and organization of norms and routines of the work process. In accordance with this premise, the Nursing Professional Exercise Law states that nurses must manage nursing services and their staff, always prioritizing the quality of the services offered⁽¹⁵⁻¹⁶⁾. Therefore, analyzing and knowing the unit as a whole and the resources available, supervising the team, promoting economy and reducing wastes is crucial to the assistance.

Furthermore, in the hospital setting, nurses are the professionals responsible for organizing the work process of the nursing team. They have to guide and carry out the tasks of the nursing team, calculate the necessary number of human resources for work, and manage conflicts. In addition, nurses have been asked to articulate the work of other professionals in the sector, to reorganize practices and policies to guide their tasks, which is also part of the role of personnel manager⁽¹⁷⁾.

In addition to these factors, the management supervisory competence was present in documents of both the HEI and the hospital. In this context, it can be affirmed that

supervision emerges as an important instrument for the qualification and legal registration of comprehensive care to users, allowing the monitoring of the nursing care provided by the team, which also benefit from an approach that supports and documents the professional practice, including health billing and auditing⁽¹⁸⁾. On this, it is worth emphasizing that the development of this competence is essential to the excellence of professional practice and to the quality of health services, and should be stimulated from the beginning of graduation and improved in the work environment.

The literature affirms that the structure of hospitals, the policy on human resources, and the institution's objectives in the provision of care influence the practice of nurses and, consequently, their supervision in the work process⁽¹⁹⁾. In this scenario, nurses need to consider the culture and the organizational system of the service in which they work, since it is in this context that the ethical problems are experienced⁽²⁰⁾.

Thus, it is up to the HEI to prepare the future nurses for the practice, as it is also indispensable that the hospital work environment offers conditions so that the professionals can improve this competence through permanent education.

In this context, the separate analysis of the documents showed that hospitals also require another clinical competence not described in the documents of the HEI analyzed, such as the Systematization of Nursing Care (SNC).

With regard to management competencies, it was also noteworthy that there were other requirements that are not included in the subjects, such as: permanent education; collaboration in research; and professional updating. Thus, it is emphasized that the fact that they are not in the documents of the subjects examined does not mean that the content is not being approached in the HEI. It does, however, call for further investigations to broaden the sources of evidence.

SNC is considered an essential competency for the performance of hospital care activities, and is characterized as a process and tool that qualifies and equips nurses and, since its establishment, has been perceived as a permanent need to improve the quality of care provided to patients, since its use favors the selection of individualized interventions, as well as the improvement of the communication in

work and the sharing of information⁽¹¹⁾. It is, therefore, necessary to improve the effective use of SNC in the management of care, since some instruments that should be based on the SNC for decision making are not yet present⁽²¹⁾. In this context, by stimulating and adhering to students' learning of SNC in a clear, objective and systematic way, the HEI contributes for these future professionals to carry out their work more clearly and effectively.

With regard to management competencies, it was evidenced that permanent education is the concern of hospital organizations, requiring nurses to be able to educate their staff, families, and patients. Permanent education is considered an organizational strategy to develop abilities in nurses. To that end, managers of health institutions should encourage, motivate and become facilitators through the constant search for training, qualification, and updates of knowledge that extrapolate the traditional models focused on vertical qualification, directed to meet specific knowledge gaps during the exercise of the profession. Thus, it should be pointed out that permanent education, when favored in the teaching-service interaction, makes it possible to adapt the teaching to the real conditions found in the world of work⁽²²⁾.

From this perspective, it is important that HEIs readjust by adapting the curricula to the approach, implementation and development of competencies, as well as hospital institutions offer strategies to identify gaps in professional practice by providing permanent education to their workers, through professional training, offering courses, updates, collaborations and participation in scientific research, in order to ensure the effectiveness and quality of the services provided.

On the other hand, the analysis of the documents also showed that some management competencies that were in the programs of the subjects offered by the HEI were not described in the hospital institution, such as: leadership; communication; teamwork and interpersonal relationships. Thus, in relation to the competence of Leadership and Decision Making, it is reflected that, although not described in hospital documents, organizations implicitly expect that nurses be able to actively lead and guide their team.

Still in this context, although the leadership competence was present in the documents of the HEI, there was a great concern of nursing

teachers to train nurses to have the skills for leadership, since the training is far from the development of leaders. In this approach, knowledge, skills, and capabilities for nursing leadership can and should be taught in bachelor courses to prepare students to take on leadership roles. However, changing curricula does not produce an immediate response in the training of graduates or in their preparation for specific care settings. Leadership specifically requires additional education and experience⁽²³⁾. It is essential that the training institution not only review the theoretical content, but also use strengthening strategies to promote the development of these competencies in the students, such as the use of simulations and exercises directed to the field of practice.

Another competence highlighted only in the documents of the HEI was communication. In this perspective, communication can be considered fundamental for nursing care. Verbal and non-verbal language and the use of effective communication techniques will allow nurses to perceive signs, gestures and movements that express the true needs of the users, providing a clear and objective sharing of ideas, thoughts and feelings⁽²⁴⁾.

Thus, the communication process is a determining factor for the establishment of a cohesive team, allowing the integration among its participants geared at the promotion of therapeutic care to human beings and their families in the health institutions. The improvement of this competence in employer institutions is, therefore, a duty.

Likewise communication, another competence described only in the documents of the HEI was interpersonal relationships and teamwork. Although not present in the documents of the hospital, health organizations in general expect that the labor relations develop in a harmonious manner so that the occupational process takes place with balance. Thus, researchers consider that teamwork and interpersonal relationships related to aspects of trust, mutual respect, recognition of the work of the team by the nurses, and the establishment of links become crucial factors for the quality of care⁽²⁵⁾.

It is evident that the labor market for new nurses may represent stress and uncertainties, and starting professional activities may cause anxiety in recent graduates, forcing them to overcome the fear of the unknown. Some

elements act as facilitators in the transition from academic to professional life, namely, the academic training characterized by good theoretical teaching, experience of extracurricular internships, position of the institution favoring the educational development of the students, and support of more experienced members of the staff⁽²⁶⁾. This scenario points to a remarkable restructuring of higher education in order to bring the students' experiences closer to the real practices of the routine of nurses.

Finally, it is considered that the emphasis on a generalist education and the expansion of the possibilities of practical experience during nursing undergraduate courses may be alternatives to meet the requirement of a profile of nurses with the necessary competencies for the reality of health organizations, and specially hospitals.

Thus, it can be affirmed that the competencies required in the hospital institution resemble, in some aspects, those taught/developed, in an HEI, also demonstrating the need to revise and include competencies, both in organizations and in the teaching of HEIs, in order to better prepare these professionals for effective practice.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In a pendulum of comings and goings, the results allowed to identify management and clinical competencies essential to hospital nurses. The clinical competencies were: use of ethics or attitude; direct patient care regarding procedures/techniques; application of theoretical-practical knowledge; and SNC. In turn, the group of management competencies were: leadership; communication; teamwork; interpersonal relationships; management of personnel, material and costs, among others.

In general, it was verified that most of the competencies required in the hospital are similar to those taught in the HEI, according to the programs of the subjects analyzed, but it is asserted that nurses are responsible for making decisions within the hospital and, therefore, need to be prepared. In this sense, their academic training can contribute, in particular, to their attitudes and to the confrontations of daily work challenges, especially in complex institution such as hospitals. Thus, training centers must rethink pedagogical strategies that help in this learning process, and the hospital institution has the responsibility to promote the growth of these

professionals when implementing strategies, so that difficulties may be lessened and more professionals trained.

However, this research is limited by the fact that the researchers selected documents from a single hospital institution and a single HEI. Therefore, for future research, it is recommended to extend the study to other educational institutions and hospital organizations, with a view to compare and/or generalize the data in order to contribute to the identification of gaps in the training of professionals, regarding the competencies that should be developed for the hospital environment.

In short, it is believed that this study is of great relevance and contributes to the reflection of nurses, managers and training centers, for them to know the competencies necessary for nurses to work in the hospital setting, and to plan pedagogical and educational strategies that make it possible to develop or improve competencies in these workers.

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Note: We would like to inform that this article was funded by the Coordination for Improvement of Higher Education Personnel - CAPES and was the result of a Master Dissertation presented in 2017 at the University of São Paulo, Ribeirão Preto College of Nursing, Graduate Program in Fundamental Nursing.

Received in: 08/01/2019

Approved in: 19/06/2019

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