

## Managerial competences of coordinators of undergraduate nursing courses

*Competências gerenciais de coordenadoras de cursos de graduação em enfermagem*  
*Competencias de gestión de coordinadoras de los cursos de licenciatura en enfermería*

Andresa Lopes Cordeiro Seabra<sup>1</sup>, Kely César Martins de Paiva<sup>2</sup>, Talita Ribeiro da Luz<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Universidade José do Rosário Vellano, Undergraduate Course in Nursing. Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

<sup>2</sup> Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Prograduate and Research Studies Center in Business. Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

<sup>3</sup> Faculdade Novos Horizontes, Postgraduate Program in Business Administration. Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil.

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** to analyze the experiences of how the managerial competences of coordinators, ideal and real, of undergraduate nursing course coordinators from the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. **Method:** the theoretical framework presented a conceptual model of eight managerial roles (director, producer, monitor, coordinator, mentor, facilitator, broker and innovator) and three specific competences to the exercise of each one of them. Descriptive and qualitative research with 14 interviews conducted using semi-structured scripts, whose data were subjected to content analysis. **Results:** we highlighted the roles: mentor, director and facilitator as the most prominent, whose competences can be continually improved as a result of differentiated and permanent demands which the subject face, in addition to the natural ambiguities and contradictions of management function. **Conclusion:** the higher education institution can adjust their selection and evaluation processes for this position, including the difficulties of professional competences training required in the exercise of managerial function.

**Key words:** Professional Competence; Management; Graduate Programs in Nursing.

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** analisar como são vivenciadas as competências gerenciais, ideais e reais, de coordenadores de cursos de graduação em Enfermagem na cidade de Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais. **Método:** o modelo conceitual consta de oito papéis gerenciais (diretor, produtor, monitor, coordenador, mentor, facilitador, inovador e negociador) e três competências específicas para o exercício de cada um deles. Estudo descritivo qualitativo, com 14 entrevistas feitas com roteiros semi-estruturados, cujos dados foram submetidos à análise de conteúdo. **Resultados:** destacaram-se os papéis de mentor, diretor e facilitador, cujas competências podem ser aprimoradas continuamente em virtude das demandas diferenciadas e permanentes a que estão submetidos os sujeitos, além das ambiguidades e contradições naturais da função gerencial. **Conclusão:** as instituições de ensino superior podem ajustar seus processos seletivos e avaliativos para tal cargo, compreendendo as dificuldades de formação das competências profissionais exigidas no exercício da função gerencial.

**Descritores:** Competência Profissional; Gerência; Programas de Graduação em Enfermagem.

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** analizar cómo los coordinadores de los cursos de licenciatura en enfermería en la ciudad de Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, experimentan las competencias de gestión, ideales y reales. **Método:** el marco teórico presentó un modelo conceptual con ocho papeles de dirección (director, productor, supervisora, coordinadora, mentor, facilitador, negociador e innovadoras) y tres competencias específicas para el ejercicio de cada uno de ellos. Búsqueda descriptiva y cualitativa, 14 entrevistas con scripts semiestructuradas, cuyos datos fueron sometidos a análisis de contenido. **Resultados:** se destacaron los papeles de mentor, director y facilitador, cuyas competencias se pueden mejorar continuamente como resultado de las demandas diferenciadas y permanentes que se enfrentan los coordinadores del curso de licenciatura, debido a las naturales ambigüedades y contradicciones de la función de gestión. **Conclusión:** el institución puede ajustar sus procesos de selección y evaluación

para esta posición, incluyendo las dificultades de la formación de las competencias profesionales requeridas en el ejercicio de la función directiva.

**Palabras clave:** Competencia Profesional; Gerencia; Programas de Graduación en Enfermería.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

Kely César Martins de Paiva

E-mail: kelypaiva@face.ufmg.br

## INTRODUCTION

To meet the demands of a globalized world, institutions<sup>(1-2)</sup> require a professional profile that is in constant development, able to keep up with technological innovations, being resolute, proactive and easy for negotiation. Healthcare organizations, specifically, have experienced an economic crisis that demands efficient management, in general, under the responsibility of nurses. From them, peculiar characteristics are required, such as agility and ability to make decision that are: assertive, creative, innovative, adding economic value to the company and social value to the individual<sup>(3-5)</sup>.

Consequently, reflexes in education and in how it should be conducted, implying the notion of competence as a pillar in professional training. In this sense, the role of the university is highlighted<sup>(6-7)</sup>, as the "institution that has as raw material knowledge that exists to leverage the society and contribute to its development, aimed at training qualified professionals"<sup>(7)</sup>.

Considering this reality, the training of nurses presents challenges to achieve changes driven by social and political context facing the problems of reality, technological changes and the epidemiological and demographic profile of society<sup>(4-5)</sup>.

In general, the Law of Directives and Bases of National Education<sup>(8)</sup>, enacted in 1996 (LDB/96), is presented as a structural framework of higher education, heavily influenced by neoliberal ideas, to promote change and expansion in higher education, mainly in the private sector, but ruled in fragile regulatory processes<sup>(9)</sup>. From this law, in 2001 the National Curriculum Guidelines have been clarified for various undergraduate courses, including Nursing<sup>(9-11)</sup>, among others in the health field<sup>(10)</sup>. The directives inform how the undergraduate courses should be conducted and the results aimed at in terms of competences that should be built in the future nurses.

In this context, the undergraduate Nursing courses found its way to expansion<sup>(9)</sup>, combined with a strengthening in the labor market with increasing nurses' employability in new areas. These areas are the family health strategy, home care, consulting in audits and in emergency mobile service, among others. This fact brings with it the possibility of increasing the number of vacancies in teaching and consequently in management positions for undergraduate courses.

However, *strict sensu* graduate programs have not kept pace with the expansion of higher education institutions (HEIs). According to the Brazilian Ministry of Education, published by the Higher Education Personnel Improvement Coordination (CAPES), in 2013, Brazil had a total of 28 Graduate Nursing Programs at PhD level, 47 academic master degrees level and 14 professional master degrees. In the state of Minas Gerais, only two universities offered PhD courses and academic master degrees (*Universidade Federal do Triângulo Mineiro* and

*Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais*) and three other offered only an academic master degree (*Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora*, *Universidade Federal de Alfenas* and *Universidade Federal de São João Del Rei*), totalling two PhD programs and five Master degrees program across the state<sup>(12)</sup>.

This scenario boosted the occupancy of these placements by professionals who migrated from professional practice area in health institutions to teaching and later to the management of undergraduate courses. "University administrators generally do not have, before taking their position, knowledge of management, leadership and people, which can cause different problems"<sup>(13)</sup>. HEIs are dependent on the competence of their professors, researchers and managers to fulfil their social role, these professionals need to remain in constant development in order to ensure the production of new knowledge<sup>(5)</sup> and its reproduction in the classroom. Therefore, to perform their role with excellence, university manager should deeply learn about its activities, having global view of the institution and being able to settle the legal requirements in their daily activities<sup>(5)</sup>.

We notice that HEIs are considered complex institutions, as they accumulate multiple academic tasks (teaching, research and student affairs and services) different from other types of organization, they have peculiar structure and goals and usually face common challenges in the market, such as increased competition, legal requirements and standards of regulatory authorities. This shows the importance of coordinators competence, towards the implementation of organizational strategies facing legal and social demands<sup>(13)</sup>.

Competence is understood as: "ability to mobilize and apply knowledge in a given situation"<sup>(3)</sup>. In the case of course coordinators, the position relates to managing, characterized by ambiguities, contradictions and fragmentation<sup>(3,14)</sup>. Thus, professional competence are at the management level that will enable individuals to play roles within the institutions, generating results, recognized and legitimized by themselves and by other social actors with which their work takes place<sup>(15)</sup>.

In addition to these facts, we may cite other facts found in the literature related to nursing professional, such as modelling the workforce<sup>(2)</sup>, well-being and job satisfaction<sup>(16-18)</sup>, occupational stress<sup>(2,20-23)</sup>, Burnout Syndrome<sup>(2,16-17,19,21)</sup>, occupational fatigue<sup>(22)</sup> and violence at work<sup>(2)</sup>. Besides these, there are other complex issues and which occur during daily work as managing other professional categories within the health area and other categories<sup>(2,24)</sup> as well as the fact that other professionals are being managed by a nurse<sup>(2)</sup>. This reality recognizes the need for better training of the nurse professional, due to the challenges they will face.

Therefore, the research problem is based on three points: (1) the complexity of higher education, (2) changes in the labor market with demand for higher levels of quality and professional competence, (3) the work of course coordinators in

the management process and their influence on training and hence on the quality of graduate professional. By the complexity of the synthesized situation, the question that guided the study was: how are the managerial competences (required and effective) experienced, from the coordinators of undergraduate nursing courses in the city of Belo Horizonte?

Thus, this study aimed to analyze how the management competences, effective and required, are experienced from undergraduate nursing courses coordinators from the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais.

## METHOD

It is considered that competence goes beyond the training of the action potential:

It is a real mobilization and production of a set of knowledge from differentiated nature [...] whose result is recognized and valued both by the individual and by third parties. It is not easily understandable by others, as it relates to behavior, an act in itself, whose transfer is not simple or immediate<sup>(25)</sup>.

Therefore, professional competence is made explicit by the worker in their daily behavior, based on the roles they perform in the organization. In the case of those engaged in management function, they are expected to behave with resolutivity for the various work demands that are characteristics of the hierarchical level model, according to the context in which the organization is subject. Therefore, organizations work in accordance with one or more management models, that is, sets of administrative practices put into execution to achieve a goal, able to meet its demands. Depending on the context and the adopted management model, it is up to the manager to play certain roles in order to operationalize it<sup>(15)</sup>. Thus, the management model indicates the optimal roles of managers, which can be effectively fulfilled or not<sup>(17)</sup>.

The conceptual model used in this research<sup>(15)</sup> present four management models which are based in two axiological dichotomies: (1) stability and control versus flexibility and autonomy; and (2) internal focus and integration versus external focus and differentiation. Each management model implies two possibilities of action of managers in two roles, totaling eight possible roles. The four management models, the values that sustain them and the relevant roles are presented in Figure 1.

In box 1, the management models, their emphases and competitive values, the relevant roles and responsibilities of each role are detailed.

These four models are interconnected as subdomains of a larger construct called organizational effectiveness and none of them alone provide the extent of that effectiveness. It is necessary to consider them as part of a larger framework, which they called the "framework of competitive values". Ideally the actual performance in the four models concurrently, as the strategies that are effective in one situation will not necessarily be in others<sup>(15)</sup>.

Therefore, managers must play their roles competently, with recognized results both in the social and organizational contexts, which denotes an effective profile. The model has four

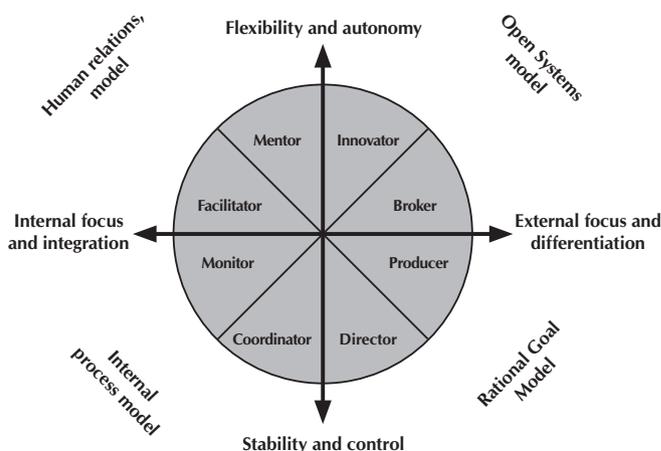


Figure 1 - Management and Managerial Role Models<sup>(3)</sup>

effective profiles<sup>(15)</sup>, and none of the roles is neglected, despite allowing imbalance resulting from own styles of each manager; in general, all roles are valued. Effective profiles<sup>(15)</sup> are as follows: Master (all the roles are played homogeneously), conceptual producers (facilitator, monitor and coordinator shall be exercised satisfactorily, but more timid than the others), aggressive performers (facilitator, mentor, innovator and broker are more fragile than the others) and peaceful aggregators (innovator, broker and producer are performed more timidly than the others). Besides these, other four ineffective management profiles<sup>(15)</sup> were presented and called: chaotic adapters (mentor, facilitator and innovator are the roles played a little less unsatisfactory than the others), annoying coordinators (monitor and coordinator stand out from the others, but still ineffective), stifling workaholics (producer is the least ineffective) and extreme unproductive (all roles are played timidly).

Thus, identifying the profile of managers in organizations may be important in view of the impact that the adopted management models can have on their performance. In the case of this research, it regards undergraduate course coordinators performance in a HEI.

In order to do that, a descriptive field research was carried out in a manner similar to other research on the subject<sup>(3,25)</sup>. Given its potential<sup>(26)</sup>, the qualitative approach was chosen due to the need of depth in the research problem. After approval of the research project for the Research Ethics Committee, on 09/10/2013, subjected to one of the HEI through Brazil Platform, under the protocol number 419195, collection of data began through interviews with semi-structured scripts<sup>(3,25)</sup>. This happened between the months of November and December 2013.

After reading and signing the consent form (CF), the coordinators of the 14 undergraduate nursing course were interviewed in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, identified by the Register of Higher Education Institutions of the Brazilian Ministry of Education (E-Mec).

The interviews were recorded in full, in order to maintain the reliability of data and, after being transcribed, data were subjected to content analysis technique<sup>(3,25)</sup>. The analysis categories were chosen a priori and are based on the conceptual model

**Box 1** - Management models, emphasis, competitive values, roles and managerial competences<sup>(3,15)</sup>

Models	Objective	Competitive values	Managerial roles	Specific competencies
Rational goals	Explicit goals, a rational analysis and decision-making initiative	Stability and control and external focus and differentiation	Director	1. Development and communication of a vision
				2. Setting goals and objectives
				3. Planning and organizing
			Producer	1. Labor productivity
2. Fostering a productive work environment				
3. Time management and stress				
Internal processes	Definition of responsibilities, measurement and documentation	Stability and control and internal focus and integration	Monitor	1. Monitoring of individual performance
				2. Performance management and collective processes
				3. Analysis of information with critical thinking
			Coordinator	1. Project management
				2. Planning work
				3. Multidisciplinary management
Human relations	Participation, conflict resolution and consensus building	Flexibility and autonomy and internal focus and integration	Mentor	1. Understanding of self and others
				2. Effective communication
				3. Development of employees
			Facilitator	1. Constitution teams
				2. Use of a participatory decision-making
				3. Conflict management
Open systems	Political adaptation, creative problem solving, innovation and change management	Flexibility and autonomy and external focus and differentiation	Innovator	1. Living with change
				2. Creative thinking
				3. Management change
			Broker	1. Setting up and maintaining a power base
				2. Negotiating agreements and commitments
				3. Presentation of ideas

adopted<sup>(15)</sup>, that is, taking the eight roles (director, producer, monitor, coordinator, mentor, facilitator, innovator and broker) and discerning between management competences relevant to each of them (as presented in Table 1), considering the ideal and real levels. In addition to these, learning processes of coordinator function, positives and negatives points of the coordination exercise, and challenges relevant to that space were also included.

Data analysis was operationalized in three stages, according to published recommendations<sup>(3,25)</sup>, i.e. data were prepared with the transcription of all interviews in full and the organization of responses for questions. Then, we proceeded to the synthesis of responses and determining the frequency, featuring analysis or quantitative tabulation. Finally, the thematic analysis promoted a listing of questions given by the participants, which were not initially explained in the script, but highlighted in their statements, reflecting the importance given by the subjects and their possible connections with other dimensions of the managerial function in the HEIs.

## RESULTS

Among HEIs researched, a total of 13 were private and only one of them was public. Two of them have their courses in

operation for over 65 years; other four institutions are working for less than five years and the final eight institutions had their courses started in the period between five and ten years ago.

The general profile presented showed that the subjects are female, in their majority married, predominant age group between 36 and 40 years; most of them have a master's degree, working in a private HEI, have more than 20 years of professional experience. In nursing, they have between 5 and 10 years of experience in academia and is working in the HEI for the same period of time. Most of them work full time and is coordinating the HEI course for less than five years. In addition, more than half have previous experience of coordination, especially in tertiary care, and currently has another employment in addition to the HEI.

Regarding titles, ten participants worked on their Master's degrees before the coordination activities of undergraduate Nursing courses and only two had completed their PhD prior to this role.

Of the 14 people interviewed, 12 have gone through professional experience in the tertiary health sector, and of these, eight came to occupy positions of coordination and administrative management in those locations. In addition, 12 participants initially had an experience in teaching in higher education, and these five first went through teaching in vocational education.

In the statements the trajectory and its positive impact on the exercise of the course coordinator functions were explained:

*If I had not gone through the management experience before, I think I wouldn't have lasted as the coordination (laughs), an instrument changed. It used to be nurse technicians, nurses and doctors, now the figures have changed, but I'm sure that experience helped me a lot to take on the role of management in another function. (N5)*

*It helped. I think if I had left university and came straight to assume a coordination, I would not have this experience, this practical experience. (N6)*

*I understand that the management process tools are the same and you will only adapt according to the situation you are dealing with. So, it was positive, no doubt. (N13)*

When asked about what competences that a course coordinator must have, in general, the most recurrent reports of participants are related to the following topics: leadership; pay attention to financial issues in the planning of actions; management of conflicts; learning how to plan; listening skills; having respect for others and good interpersonal relationships; knowing and performing academic functions; having experience in the profession; and knowing how to work with goals.

As for the perception of having the necessary competences identified for themselves, some of the interviewees said that although externalized some of these competences, they recognize the need to continue developing constantly. Among the real competences most frequent in the statements of these coordinators are: planning; participatory management; good interpersonal competences and leadership ability.

*I am a little anxious, I like getting things moving, but they need to be planned. (N1)*

*I still suffer comparing some administratively terms because it is not really my training, but I mean ... taking care of the course, managing this course is quite ok for me, the management tools, such as planning and organizing the course, I think I have them. (N4)*

*But something that I have learned, is never to interrupt, never making a decision in isolation, listen to my peers, and from there, I can make a decision. (N12)*

*I understand that the soul of the coordinator is that he has this function, he must unite the student and the faculty, he is the link among all. (N5)*

*The good relationship that I have with the work team, both professors, as the staff facilitates the management. (N10)*

*This relationship with people I'm always trying to expand [...]. This competence, which I find most difficult and crucial, is the human relations, because I'm impulsive, so I'm controlling, and this personal issue has to be worked, not only on a daily basis, but in every hour. (N11)*

The statements, added to the ordinary answers about the "need to improve", have implications for the management competences. Learning these roles was not easy, required effort of the coordinators. Some statements point to support of various actors:

*There are some sectors with institutional researchers who are responsible for all this contact with MEC, so I followed her for a few days so she could teach me all those things. (N1)*

*Here, the institution has always had this concern since we started, at any given time the need arose, the group noticed and started by bringing managers, training, doing short courses to people of this educational management. Every beginning of the semester for short course for professors and coordinators. (N10)*

On the other hand, they stated stressful experiences, with a negative impact on the quality of the work and own perception of the coordinators about the lack of support:

*I think we didn't have much training, actually we had no training so then we are learning through leaps and bounds. So it is missing, being able to see what worked, what went wrong. (N2)*

*I think I'm learning the hard way, because if you put in a position that often you do not even have time to get to know things, go through all the procedures that have within the institution and you have to get the job done. (N3)*

Also in relation to learning for the position, we sought to determine the influence that *strictu sensu* graduate (masters or PhD) could have had on the development of competences relating to course coordinator. In this regard, the participants were divided in three groups:

a. those who thought that graduate studies partly contributed:

*Specifically to the coordinating function of undergraduate degree course I do not think so, unless the issue is related to research, which is also an assignment and concern of the course coordinator and being more maturity, which a master's degree give us. (N2)*

*The master's degree expands your view, it expands the discussion on academic issues, it opens you for that, so I think at this point, it helps. (N12)*

b. those who thought that the graduate studies did not contribute:

*In general, both masters and PhD helped improve my view as a professional and this impacts on my action as coordinator, but nothing specific as coordinator. (N8)*

c. those who thought that the graduate degree helped:

*Fully different ... 100% [...]. I'm a better coordinator after the Masters, probably more mature in the feeling of at least understanding what is part of my management and what is not. (N9)*

In addition, the experience of management positions were appointed as positive and negative. The most frequently mentioned negative points were the overload of responsibilities, the presence of monitoring processes and inadequate control of both patients and staff; the limited time available for the coordination; difficulties related to the (low) faculty commitment and their performance with limited autonomy, complicating and restricting their decision-making process. This can have a negative impact on their work results.

*It is the work overload, because today you do not see only the academic side, you have to manage other problems for the HEIs [...]. So you have to help put the student inside, you have to keep the student here, you have to see the financial side of the student, if he is paying, if he is not, you have to try to put him in the government program with a scholarship because he cannot afford the course, then there are many duties and responsibilities that are, in my view, wrong. (N4)*

*The coordinator has been held responsible for a lot of the administrative functions, he has to be very devoted to administrative and financial matters, and of course, sustainability issues, especially in private institutions, and educational, academic issues they have been over, because the academic demands are also our responsibility so we have little time to think. (N12)*

*It's really hard for professors to understand the whole process of management, what the goals are, objectives, given that professors work across multiple institutions and the amount of responsibility and the level of demand vary from one institution to another. (N13)*

They also verbalized positive aspects of the exercise of being the undergraduate course coordinator and the most frequent aspects relate to being able to contribute to the training of students and health in general and having a good personal relationship with the work team.

*Being part of the training of students [...]. I think this magnifies and is a responsibility that we bring to us. When done well, I think it is worth, so that's what I really like to be able to contribute to each student who is walking there for their training. (N2)*

*Such question, as an educator, you are fighting, this could be idealism, but we are fighting for better education, so I think this is very serious, I'm going deep from my heart for you [...]. If we can educate and train people to work with health in Brazil, I have this ideal of wanting to improve one thing in terms of improving the country, improving the training of those people who will deal with health. (N4)*

Finally, they also mentioned the challenges experienced them on a daily basis coordination, focusing on students' recruitment and maintaining the quality of the course. The following statements illustrate these positions of the participants:

*Today, the biggest challenge we have is to have student, because we are living in a moment that the course is closing. (E1)*

*Recruiting students and maintaining a number of low evasion. (N5)*

*The challenge is the quality of the course, keeping, "why are we here", so then keeping that goal every day, professor analysis, student analysis, analysis of what we are offering regarding infrastructure, because we have little or no autonomy to discuss the issue of infrastructure, but there are daily concerns, what I seek is quality, for sure. (N7)*

## DISCUSSION

The results indicate that older HEIs demonstrate a certain independence from the market and the expansion of higher education movements, from which it also gave the expansion of undergraduate nursing courses<sup>(9,12)</sup>; the latest HEIs reflect the expansion in the number of vacancies in nursing programs in the state of Minas Gerais, from 2000 to 2007. There was a decrease in the number of vacancies offered in response to fewer enrolments in undergraduate Nursing courses in the state and also in Belo Horizonte<sup>(9)</sup>.

By analyzing the professional career of the participants until they reached their current position of the undergraduate program coordinator, it is clear the similarity between them: most began their professional life in the tertiary health sector, occupying management positions, then they entered the academic life as a professor in higher education, reaching the position of coordinator course afterwards. Work experiences prior to course coordination office occupation contributed positively to the performance of the duties inherent to it, especially when it came to interpersonal skills, people management and experiences with organization and quality. These data diverge from the literature pointing professional unpreparedness of those who exercise managerial function in HEIs<sup>(13)</sup>.

The development of competences by participants is one of the products of this path, as well as the critical ability to see which ones would be ideal and should be externalized through the roles they perform on a daily basis.

The answers about the ideal competences of a course coordinator were synthesized and each was identified as corresponding to managerial role according to the analytical model adopted<sup>(15)</sup>, highlighting the preponderance of director, facilitator, mentor and coordinator roles; there was also less incidence of monitor and producer roles as well as the absence of broker role.

Therefore, the competences that seem to be valued by the coordinators are related to: development and communication in a view, setting goals and objectives, planning and organization, concerning the role of manager<sup>(15)</sup>; formation of teams, the use of a participatory decision-making and conflict management, regarding the role of facilitator<sup>(15)</sup>; understanding of themselves and others, effective communication and promotion of development of employees, relevant to the role of mentor<sup>(15)</sup>; project management, working on planning and management of multidisciplinary coordinator role<sup>(15)</sup>. According to reports, these would be the skills needed for effective performance in the course of coordinator role, given the

competitive<sup>(5)</sup> and institutional<sup>(15)</sup> environment in which the majority of the HEIs operate.

However, as the ideal behavior does not always become real<sup>(4-5)</sup>, that is, the ideal may or may not be checked in the praxis of the coordinators discussed in this research by the model adopted<sup>(15)</sup>. Analyzing the reports of the real competences, i.e. on the fact that they have the necessary competences they listed, they can see then that the director, facilitator and mentor roles are highlighted, in line with the roles and responsibilities required, appointed by the participants.

So when asked about the competences they actually have, there was great similarity with the answers on the necessary competences listed by themselves. Despite the usual "need to improve", there were similarities between the ideal and the real. The figure of the "human" appeared as a strong trait in the roles of mentor and facilitator, repeatedly mentioned in the interviews. The management of this role, by the coordinators materialize one of the challenges of its function, implying externalizing competences, corroborating with the literature<sup>(5)</sup>, meaning similar to completion and maintenance of rules, most pertaining to the role of director<sup>(15)</sup>.

Another dimension of continuing education relates to the experiences of everyday life, showing the construction of a personal work routine, even among those who stated having received some kind of guidance of the institution at times, which is supported by other studies<sup>(13)</sup>.

Regarding the requirements to minimum academic training to exercise the position of undergraduate course coordinator<sup>(8,11)</sup>, graduate degrees, to a greater or lesser degree, were considered useful, directly or indirectly, by the participants. However, we noticed a gap with regard to training for the exercise of managerial function<sup>(3,13-14,25)</sup>, considered essential to the achievement of educational purposes<sup>(5)</sup>.

The ambiguous, contradictory and fragmented face of the management<sup>(3,14)</sup> can be observed in many positive and negative points listed by the participants, showing the accumulation and the burden on management activities they carried out, corroborating the literature<sup>(3,14)</sup>. On the other hand, the need to reconcile the numerous management functions with other academic activities performed by the manager indicate a necessity that has not been supplied yet, differing results presented in other studies<sup>(13)</sup>. In both cases, impacts on physical and mental health, as well as the home-work interface and interpersonal relationships because of low commitment of some faculty members<sup>(13)</sup>, seems to interfere with the results presented by the coordinators, compromising recognition of their competence with respect to the progress of internal processes in HEIs.

Finally, the possibility of contributing to the training of other human beings and professionals, to the health of the population and the development of healthy interpersonal relationships with team work, appears to counterbalance the operational difficulties of HEI (recruiting students and maintaining the quality of the course). These data are similar to those of other studies<sup>(13)</sup>, with respect to the challenges related to the knowledge and competences necessary for the performance recognized as competent occupying the coordination function, as well as with regard to attempts to reconcile the

management activities and professors in addition to maintaining the involvement of other social actors within the HEIs.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

With the aim to analyze how management competences are experienced, effective and real, of Nursing undergraduate course coordinators in the city of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, we performed a qualitative research, covering all the coordinators of these courses.

To carry out its activities, in the fields of real and the ideal, the most outstanding roles were: mentor, director and facilitator, whose competences can be learned and improved continuously. However, learning the managerial function they perform within the HEI was not easy or calm, requiring permanent personal efforts and not being able to always count on institutional support. Such efforts aim to reduce the step between the ideal and the real competences, which seems to be reached with some degree of success by the participants. Obviously, this did not happen without cost to their personal health (physical and mental) and social. They externalized relational difficulties, revealing the ambiguous, contradictory and fragmented face of managerial functions that are presented in the exercise of coordinating the nursing undergraduate degree courses. This space is no exception to those stated in the literature regarding the subject. These characteristics seem to be balanced by the opportunity to contribute - directly - for the training of students and - indirectly - for the health of the population through quality education. Also, it is important to maintain a positive personal relationship with other faculty members, especially professors.

The results of the study may be useful in the management of people from HEI, to adjust the selection and evaluation process for the position of course coordinator, including the difficulties of training of professional competences required in the exercise of the managerial function.

Some research limitations were observed regarding the professional scope, which occurred only with undergraduate Nursing course coordinators, making it impossible to generalize the coordination of other courses, which may present specific features and may interfere with the managerial competences of their coordinators.

Additionally, we highlight two other issues: the first, referring to gender bias of the subjects (all women), which mirrors the profession, Nursing. In this sense, the course coordinator seems to mirror the feminization present in the profession, which transcends submission to males, usually recognized in other professional categories privileged in power relations in the context of the physician-centered health.

The second issue relates to the study location of undergraduate coordination of nursing courses located in the city of Belo Horizonte, so the expansion would be relevant for courses offered in other regions of the country, hypothesizing the presence of possible differences in the organizational and regional cultures.

Therefore, in future research, we suggest the coverage of other states and cities and even other parts of the country,

considering the different social profiles in each region which can influence the profile of the social actors involved and, consequently, the management demands. It would be also interesting to conduct similar researches including actors involved in the process of management of courses and who the coordinators are closely linked, as university deans, directors

of units and the professors in order to obtain further insights on the coordinators competences, given the importance of this feedback to a deeper understanding about the impacts of their work experiences and in the results, which go far beyond the classrooms, but also cover the activities of trained professionals and the quality of assistance they provide.

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