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## THE TEACHING OF MENTAL HEALTH IN A NURSING UNDERGRADUATE COURSE: A CASE STUDY<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Article derived from the dissertation - The teaching of mental health in the nursing undergraduate course from the perspective of the student, presented in the Postgraduate Program in Nursing of the Federal University of Paraná (UFPR), in 2009.

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**ABSTRACT:** This case study aimed to describe how the teaching of mental health is developed in a nursing undergraduate course and to verify how this teaching of mental influences the formation of the students. The sources of information were: the teaching plan, chronogram of the discipline and direct observation of the activities developed by a professor and 60 students. Luckesi's philosophy of education was the theoretical framework used. The students said that the strategies and the teaching methodology provided learning based on reality and that they motivated the search for extracurricular work which assisted the construction of knowledge. They also identified an environment of significant learning that encouraged them to exchange experiences with each other, with the professor and with other healthcare professionals. The adoption of active methodologies is shown as a viable route to achieve the pedagogic proposal in the teaching of mental health and in the formation of competent professionals.

**DESCRIPTORS:** Nursing. Psychiatric nursing. Mental health. Teaching. Learning.

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## O ENSINO DE SAÚDE MENTAL NA GRADUAÇÃO DE ENFERMAGEM: UM ESTUDO DE CASO

**RESUMO:** Pesquisa com o método estudo de caso, com objetivo de descrever como se desenvolve o ensino de saúde mental em um curso de graduação em enfermagem e verificar como o ensino de saúde mental influencia na formação dos alunos. As fontes de informações foram plano de ensino, cronograma da disciplina e observação direta das atividades desenvolvidas por um professor e 60 estudantes. Utilizou-se o referencial de educação de Luckesi. Os estudantes referiram que as estratégias e a metodologia de ensino proporcionam aprendizado a partir da realidade e incentivam a busca de locais extraclasse para auxiliar na construção do conhecimento por meio de ambientes de aprendizagem significativa, que lhes proporciona a troca de experiências entre si, com a professora e com outros profissionais de saúde. A adoção de metodologias ativas se mostra um caminho viável para atingir a proposta pedagógica no ensino de saúde mental e na formação de profissionais competentes.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Enfermagem. Enfermagem psiquiátrica. Saúde mental. Ensino. Aprendizagem.

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## LA ENSEÑANZA DE SALUD MENTAL EN LA GRADUACIÓN DE ENFERMERÍA: UN ESTUDIO DE CASO

**RESUMEN:** Investigación con el método estudio de caso con el objetivo: describir cómo se desarrolla la enseñanza de la salud mental en un curso de graduación de Enfermería y verificar cómo la enseñanza de la salud mental influye en la formación de los alumnos. Las fuentes de informaciones fueron: plan de enseñanza, cronograma de la disciplina y observación directa de las actividades desarrolladas por un profesor y 60 estudiantes. Se utilizó el referencial de educación de Luckesi. Los estudiantes refirieron que las estrategias y la metodología de enseñanza proporcionan aprendizaje a partir de la realidad, e incentivan la búsqueda de locales extra-clase para auxiliar en la construcción del conocimiento, por medio de ambientes de aprendizaje significativo, que les proporciona el intercambio de experiencias entre sí, con la profesora y con otros profesionales de salud. La adopción de metodologías activas se muestra un camino viable para alcanzar la propuesta pedagógica en la enseñanza de salud mental y en la formación de profesionales competentes.

**DESCRIPTORES:** Enfermería. Enfermería psiquiátrica. Salud mental. Enseñanza. Aprendizaje.

## INTRODUCTION

The formation of healthcare professionals has received a new conformation due to the constant scientific, technological, economic, social and epidemiological transformations worldwide. Thus, the curricula of the courses in the area of health should be developed based on the public health and education policies and the health needs of the local and global population. To ensure the professional formation from this perspective, educators must break with old educational paradigms, through continuous critical and reflective evaluation of their activities, in order to develop a modern and interactive approach in the teaching-learning process. In a modern educational context, professors are expected to observe their practice, question its effectiveness and, if necessary, modify it. For this, they must develop qualities such as flexibility, humility and courage to face new challenges.<sup>1</sup>

A major challenge for educators today is to overcome the conservative educational model and include innovative methodologies in the teaching-learning process. The active methods are based on ways to develop the learning process from real or simulated experiences, with the capacity to successfully solve tasks that are essential for the professional practice in different contexts. They are used when the intention is to contribute to meaningful learning, based on problem solving, facts or situations that lead the students to comprehend the information studied and propose solutions through a process of action-reflection-action. They also provide formative evaluation to enable the identification of what the students do not know and gives rise to new learning situations and accountability of the Educational Institutions for the formation process of the professionals, as it is them that are certifying the graduate.<sup>2</sup>

For the professor who intends to use innovative methods and differentiated teaching, the selection of activities that will be developed with the students is an important step that must occur through a critical look at the social and political context of their local reality and of the subjects involved. For this it is possible to use different methodological procedures and to promote diverse learning experiences. However, they will be more meaningful, for the professor and for the students, if they come from the previous experiences and knowledge, considering their life stories.<sup>3</sup>

Teaching as a tool for the transformation of the work processes in mental health and education, should be reoriented so that the student develops skills and abilities that include the principles proposed by the Psychiatric Reform, envisioning the psychosocial needs of the people undergoing psychological distress.<sup>4</sup> For this reason, the experience of the students in the more diverse areas of mental healthcare is essential, aiming to guide the learning that takes into account the current socio-political axes.<sup>5</sup>

The transformation of concepts in the area of mental health driven by the Psychiatric Reform Movement enable new ways of conceiving the mental health-illness process, the treatment and the ethical-professional stance in the care to the person with a mental disorder, from the perspective of the psychosocial paradigm, which is seen as one of the challenges in the formation of competent professionals for the mental health practice in this new context.<sup>4</sup> The teaching of mental health nursing should provide conditions for undergraduate students to develop scientific, humanistic and technical skills, and knowledge with specificity in the area in question, which they instrumentalize for their professional practice. However, studies have demonstrated that there are difficulties in adapting the theoretical and practical content to the care reality that, in many cases, still has a deficit of qualified personnel and has remnants from the time of asylums in the concept of the mental health professionals. Articulation difficulties in the multiprofessional team work have also be evidenced, as well as a scarcity or inexistence of mental health outpatient services organized in the network system for the development of the academic practice.<sup>6-8</sup>

Another aspect to be considered is that teaching should be personalized, value originality, and present options in the disciplines and activities. Where possible the strategies should be diversified and the various social actors involved in educational partnerships aiming to create modalities where skills and tacit knowledge are recognized to give social visibility.<sup>9</sup> Thus, this study had as its guiding question: how should mental health teaching be developed in the undergraduate nursing course? The aims were to describe how to develop mental health teaching in an undergraduate course in nursing and to verify how the mental health teaching influences the formation of the students.

## THEORETICAL-CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is mainly based on the concepts of education, human being, professor, student, teaching, school, curriculum and evaluation,<sup>10</sup> which represent the units of analysis of this research. Thus, education is a human action, an activity mainly characterized by a concern, an end to be achieved and not an end in itself, and an instrument of social transformation or maintenance that requires assumptions and concepts to justify and guide its routes.<sup>10</sup> Teaching is a technical way of enabling students to appropriate the culture developed, in the best and most effective way possible. Therefore, it is necessary to have technical resources and communication skills that facilitate the appropriation of what is communicated.

Regarding the subjects – human beings – involved in the learning process, professors are human beings and as such, constructors of themselves and of history through action. They are determined by the conditions and circumstances that involve them and they suffer the influences of the environment where they live and from these influences construct themselves. Professors are the people who, having acquired the level of culture necessary for the performance of their activity, mediate the teaching and learning. They are the mediators of the culture developed, accumulated and in the process of accumulation by humanity and the student, and the student is characterized by the multiple determinations of reality, an active subject that by the action is either constructed or alienated. Students are members of society that have activity, sociality, historicity, and practicality characteristics. They are the subjects that seek a new determination in terms of knowledge, skill and the way of acting.<sup>10</sup>

Scenarios are necessary so that the learning process develops, with the school being conceptualized as the institution erected by society for the education and instruction of the new generations. It is characterized as a place designated to mediate the teaching-learning process based on a curriculum in which people assimilate the legacy of the developed culture, understanding and re-elaborating their quotidian. The curriculum is a selection of content and experiences of learning and of a pedagogical practice.<sup>10</sup>

Intrinsic to the teaching-learning process, the evaluation aims to demonstrate whether the student is actually developing the learning. From

this perspective, the author of one study<sup>9</sup> focused on how the evaluation operates with provisional performances, in that it subsidizes the process of seeking the best possible results. Therefore, to have an evaluative-constructive process the performances must always be provisional or procedural, each result serving to support a further step, the evaluation being non-punctual, diagnostic (therefore dynamic) and inclusive.

## METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study and the method chosen was a descriptive case study with a representative-logical foundation,<sup>11</sup> in which the object of study was the teaching of mental health in an undergraduate nursing course. It was developed in a public university in Curitiba, in the undergraduate nursing course, more specifically, during the development of the mental health teaching, which is integrated in the discipline Nursing Care II.

The study participants were the professor responsible for the teaching of mental health and 60 students of 7<sup>th</sup> period of the nursing course, from two academic semesters. Project approval was given by the Research Ethics Committee of the Health Sciences Sector of UFPR, under CEP/SD registration n. 471.008.08.02. The information was collected only after obtaining the signature of the Terms of Free Prior Informed Consent (TFPIC) of the course coordinator, the professor and the students. To maintain the anonymity of the participants, codes (RDO1) were used when referring to reconstructions of conversations observed and recorded by the researcher in the field diary.

The evidence for a case study may come from six different sources: documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts.<sup>11</sup> To obtain the evidence for this study the teaching plan and the schedule of the discipline were consulted, with the direct observation of all the classes taught in two semesters (2007-2008) carried out, a total of 110 hours, with the help of a script and recordings in a field diary. To elaborate the description of the case, triangulation of the evidence from the above sources was performed using analytical techniques: adaption to the pattern, construction of the explanation, analysis of the time series and logical models, following the case study method.<sup>11</sup> The units of analysis were: education, human being, professor, student, education, school, cur-

riculum and evaluation, established in accordance with the theoretical framework of education,<sup>10</sup> they support the chain of evidence, fulfilling the purpose of providing a clear and comprehensive reading of the text, from the initial study questions up to the final conclusions of the case study, because they permeate all phases of the work.<sup>11</sup> The description of the evidence of this study is organized into five topics: 1) Formal structure of the discipline, 2) Organization of the teaching of mental health nursing, 3) Evaluation process of the teaching of mental health nursing, 4) Weaknesses in the mental health teaching-learning process and 5) Schematic representation of the teaching of mental health nursing.

## RESULTS

In this section, a description of the evidence of the case is presented, i.e., the teaching of mental health nursing, in line with the concepts of education, human being, professor, student, education, school, curriculum and evaluation, according to the theoretical framework.

### Formal structure of the discipline

This topic results from the documental analysis of the plan and schedule of the teaching of mental health nursing. These documents state that the teaching of mental health nursing occurs in the 7<sup>th</sup> period of the course, is taught over one semester, with 15 hours of theoretical classes and 45 of theoretical-practical classes, totaling a 55 hours workload. The plan contains the aims, among others, to assist the student in being aware of the Brazilian mental health public, state and municipal policies; being able to identify the different treatment provisions and the social support network; developing skills to care for people with mental disorders in the different healthcare services; identifying causes of mental disorders, also considering the socioeconomic determinants; acting in disease prevention and health promotion; and establishing a therapeutic relationship with the person with a mental disorder and with the family.

### Organization of the teaching of mental health nursing

For the development of the teaching of mental health nursing, the evidence presented in table 1, shows that different strategies, resources and learning scenarios are used with a view to

constantly encouraging the students to conceive a reality with a critical view, considering the prior knowledge and previous experiences. Thus, it is sought to offer the students, knowledge about the current healthcare provisions for people with mental illness and their families, and about the network of social support services in the area in which they live, recognizing these spaces as fields of professional practice.

The practical field classes are the moments that the student is encouraged to experience, as associations, self-help groups and extension projects in the service regarding the theoretic content that was discussed in the classroom, in lectures, through work presented, and in the study of simple clinical case (denominated as simple due to the short time available to the students to experience the practice in the service, which makes it impossible to carry out an in-depth clinical investigation).

The books used for the development of the seminars are: Dibs in search of self, *Canto dos malditos*, A restless mind, I never promised You a rose garden, Christiane F., We children of Bahnhof Zoo, Memoirs of extraordinary popular delusions, The dark side of innocence: Growing up bipolar, and *Dentro da chuva amarela*. The participation in support associations for people with mental disorders is an opportunity for the student to observe the dynamics of local work, the integration of family members and to interact with people with mental disorders.

In the university extension project called "Nursing care to family members and people with mental disorders in the university extension program", developed in partnership with the Association of Support for People with Mental Disorders (AADOM), two days a week, activities are performed called the Conversation wheel and Open space, in which students carry out therapeutic interactions, ludic activities (games, painting, watching movies) and nursing consultations. The students are asked to identify a self-help group in their community in which they can follow one of the meetings. The groups should provide support and guidance to people with mental disorders or alcohol and other drug users in abstinence and family members. The critical analysis and discussion of films occur through a script with questions attached to topics that help the students to reflect, for example, about the relationship of the protagonist with the family, the healthcare team and their social network,

the adherence to the treatment, and the clinical diagnosis, signs and symptoms. Among others, the films selected are: *Estamira*, *Mr. Jones*, *The soloist*, *A beautiful mind*, *Prince of tides*, *K-pax*, and *The fisher king*.

Picture 1 presents the strategies used for the development of the teaching of mental health nursing, relating them to the scenarios in which they happen, to the resources used and to the subjects involved.

**Picture 1 - Strategies used in the teaching of mental health, related to the scenarios, resources and subjects involved**

Scenario	Strategy	Resource	Subject	Evaluation
Various*	Critical analysis	Movie	Student, professor	Oral, written, self-assessment
Various*	Critical analysis	Paradidactic book	Student, professor	Seminar, self-assessment
Extension project	Participation	Student†	Person with a mental disorder, family members, student, professor	Oral, written, self-assessment
Support associations	Participation	Student†	Person with a mental disorder, family members, student, professor	Oral, written, self-assessment
Help group	Participation	Student†	Students, drug dependent people, community	Oral, written, self-assessment
Various*	Thematic work	Research	Student, professor	Oral, written, self-assessment
Hospital institution	Case Study	Interview, patient records, books	Student, professor, work team, person with a mental disorder	Oral, written, self-assessment
Hospital institution	Field practical lessons	Student†	Student, professor, work team, person with a mental disorder	Oral, written, self-assessment

\* Various: activities in which the students could choose where to perform them. For example, a movie could be watched as a group or individually, at the university or in the home of a student; Student†: the main resources used in the learning process are the students themselves with their prior knowledge and historical baggage in order to construct knowledge in mental health.

At the end of each semester, the content, the learning spaces and the methodologies used are evaluated and discussed with the students, which supports the organization of the forthcoming semester. This is because the student, after having experienced the different moments of the teaching-learning process in this area, can collaborate as an active subject regarding the quality and relevance of what is taught. Thus, students and professors jointly evaluate the organization of the teaching-learning process. The students reported that at the beginning of the semester they did not realize the reason for or the importance of some strategies, stating that they considered that these strategies did not add value. However, at the end of the discipline, when asking the students how the teaching-learning process occurred considering the form of active methodologies, they said that the set of strategies adopted, due to the multiplicity of the activities and opportunities, facilitated their learning and contributed to a change in their perceptions about the person with a mental disorder and the types of care provided for this person.

Next, reconstructions of dialogues are presented taken from direct observation in one of the moments of discussion among the professors and students regarding the proposed activities:

*[...] after having developed all the activities proposed in the discipline, I realized that everything we do can be therapeutic for them. The conversation, the care, the limits and the activities, I learned, for example, to tell her I can not hug her all the time, because if I do I will have to embrace all the others who are there, this shows the limit and that there are more people there, not just her (RDO1).*

*[...] all the activities were very important to increase our knowledge about mental health. It is a very large area, so it would not be possible to know the fields if we did not have so many extracurricular activities. These activities should definitely be proposed for the next students (RDO2).*

*[...] the activities performed were important in terms of understanding the work of the professionals within the field of mental health, they also prompted us to be future professionals with a different view about*

people with mental disorders and reminded us that we must be careful and thorough, providing quality, differentiated care to these people (RDO3).

The perception of the students demonstrates the learning process that began in the reality experienced by them in the extracurricular activities, and the importance of knowing the different provisions available to assist the person with a mental disorder as well as the social support network of the area in which they live, in order to stimulate autonomous learning. During the development of the activities in the different areas of practice, and due to the involvement with the subjects in the process of care for people with mental disorders (Table 1), the students knew a little of the transformations in the treatment and care modes that have occurred in response to the Psychiatric Reform. Therefore, it is sought to articulate these healthcare provisions and support spaces to the teaching-learning process, so that they occur together and with the knowledge of the reality in which the student belongs.

### **Evaluation process of the teaching of mental health nursing**

The evaluation of the teaching of mental health, the object of this study, occurs in a formative procedural way, as it starts on the first day of class. In this moment an evaluation is carried out of the impact in order to understand what "baggage" the students bring in relation to the theme and how they perceive it, following this dynamic until the end of the discipline, as exemplified below:

[...] *I hope that the discipline teaches us to distinguish when there is a mental disorder* (RDO4).

[...] *we learnt to care, to provide comfort in the ICU, but what about mental health? What do we do to provide comfort [...], to care for the patients with a disorder?* (RDO1).

[...] *many patients must bathe and eat alone, so what are we going to do in the care?* (RDO2).

To evaluate the students in each strategy used in this teaching, instruments are employed that enable individual evaluation by highlighting points/issues considered important and that are related and complement the other strategies. These instruments are available to the students from the course intranet site, called the restricted space of the student, at the beginning of the semester so that they are aware of the aspects that will be considered in the evaluation process.

### **Weaknesses in the mental health teaching-learning process**

One of the weaknesses highlighted refers to the workload intended for the teaching of the subject, in that, among the 3,600 hours of the course, only 55 hours are allotted for its complete development. The following reports demonstrate this perception by the students:

[...] *I think we have little time to present and discuss a subject, the themes for carrying out the work were great, but because of the short time available it was not possible to make the most of them* (E5).

[...] *little time for presentation of very important issues for our learning, we had to move forward in the presentation not managing to have a more detailed discussion* (E6).

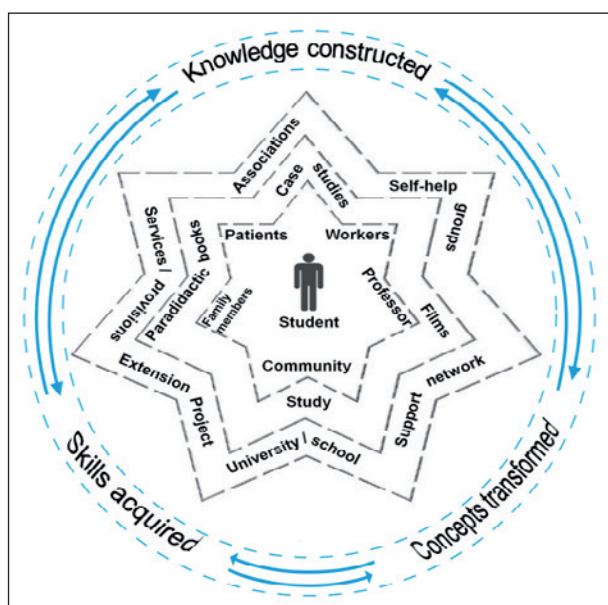
The question of little time and its relationship to the amount of planned topics and activities was highlighted by both the students and the professor. They reported that a deepening of the scientific knowledge of the subject was not possible, nor of the academic practice in the various provisions of mental health care that exist today, as a result of the psychiatric reform movement and the social support network, in turn determining an overload of extracurricular activities for the students. However, this difficulty encourages the students to act autonomously, making them responsible for the pursuit of knowledge in the extracurricular activities proposed by the professor.

The professor also highlighted as a weakness, the fact of being the only professor of this specific area in the course studied. This is reflected in the distribution of students in groups of 10 to 12 individuals, which makes it impossible to use the Psychosocial Care Centers as areas for the practical classes, because these services usually only allow up to five students to attend at the same time. It was highlighted that exchanges for the construction of knowledge occur only with undergraduate students and master's students that are developing dissertations under the guidance of the professor.

### **Schematic representation of the teaching of mental health nursing**

From the evidence obtained and described above, it was possible to construct Figure 1, which shows schematically the development of the teaching of mental health nursing, based on active methodologies. In it, the students are the center of the pedagogic process, who, as the subjects, also

construct their learning in the relationship with other subjects/social actors who attend the extension project and other learning and care scenarios during the activities of the discipline, such as the professor, the workers of the healthcare services and associations, the members of self-help groups, the students of other courses, family members and people with mental disorders. All these subjects, in one way or another, are present in their learning experience. The professor acts as an intermediary between the student and the other actors, and, through the strategies and experiences with the social actors, directs the construction of knowledge, the transformation of concepts by the student and the acquisition of skills to work with people with mental disorders.



**Figure 1 - Graphical representation of the teaching of mental health nursing**

## DISCUSSION

The transformation of mental health care in Brazil is represented by the implementation of recent public policies, new healthcare services and forms of treatment which have promoted important implications in the teaching of mental health. These influences require the academic environments to promote the construction of critical and reflective thinking. Furthermore, knowledge consumed by the undergraduate students should lead them to comprehend and recognize the need to explore new paths of knowledge and practices of care to people with mental disorders promoted by the historical and social process known as

the Psychiatric Reform. This context promotes a concern in those that are directly related with the planning of the formal structure of the discipline of the undergraduate mental health nursing discipline. It therefore appears that the subjects in the teaching process studied are perceived according to the theoretical framework adopted in this study,<sup>10</sup> so that the professor and the student are material-spiritual beings, with many objective determinants that involve them. They have a physical-biological nature that is constructed by the growth and intelligence that acquire complex levels of reflection through their relationship with the environment and through the activity. Also they are beings with a greater or lesser ability to appropriate knowledge and skills, depending on their experiences and conviviality.<sup>12</sup>

The person with a mental disorder is the social actor of the mental health formation of the nursing undergraduate student, whose negative image of a dangerous, frightening person with a deteriorated general appearance, has been constructed over the years in society and transmitted to the people in the family environment through films, media reports and television. This social imaginary of the insane and of insanity is brought by the students to the academic space, because, as the subject of the history, they assimilated the concepts received from the social existence and even experiences of having a family member or acquaintance who has received treatment, mostly the traditional type, which is characterized by being directed solely and exclusively toward hospitalization, not respecting the individuality of the subject.<sup>13</sup> These aspects are sometimes presented as barriers and as resistance of the students to grasp the vision that emerges from the psychosocial context. From this perspective, it is important that the students recognize that the mental disorder is not restricted to the insane in the asylum or psychiatric hospital. Through activities such as the critical analysis of a film suggested by the professor, participation in a meeting of the extension project, support associations and help groups, the student is able to know the different provisions that currently exist to assist the person with a mental disorder, as well as knowing the social support network of the area in which they live. With this recognition of the reality, it is sought to deconstruct the conventional wisdom that the insane person is in an appropriate place/hospital for their treatment, closed, secured and that society is composed of "normal people". This stimulates

autonomous learning, making students realize that they can be responsible for constructing their own knowledge, thus minimizing the consequences of the weaknesses found regarding the working hours available for the development of the teaching of mental health nursing.

As well as the services that comprise the Brazilian National Health Service (SUS), the Law of Guidelines and Bases (LDB) states that education involves the formative processes that have their development in family life, in human relationships, in work, in social movements, cultural events and in the civil society organizations.<sup>14</sup> In the Guidelines for nursing education, the establishments of relationships with the social context is highlighted, recognizing the structure and forms of social organization, its transformations and expressions, the promotion of healthy lifestyles, accommodating the needs of the clients/patients, acting as an agent of social transformation and the provision of nursing care consistent with the different groups of the community.<sup>15</sup> These principles are respected when, in the development of the teaching of mental health nursing, the students are encouraged to know the new institutional spaces that arise from the transformation of the concepts of mental health and illness, the modes of treatment and the relationship of the professionals and society with the person with a mental disorder driven by the psychiatric reform movement.

The dedication of the professors was observed in encouraging the students to perform extracurricular activities, both for the recognition of autonomy in the construction of the knowledge itself, as well as to minimize the consequences of the limit implied by the working hours available for the development of the teaching of mental health nursing. For the professor who intends to use innovative teaching methods, the selection of activities that will be developed with students is an important step that must occur through a critical look at the social and political context of their local reality and of the subjects involved. It is possible to use different methodological procedures and to offer more diverse learning experiences. However, these experiences will be more significant if they come from the prior knowledge and experience of the professor and, likewise, of the students, when also considering their life stories.<sup>3</sup>

For the teaching-learning process to happen, teaching strategies are established, also called means or procedures. Strategies are technical means used to fulfill an educational proposal

that does not exist in isolation, but is connected to and dependent on a theoretical-philosophical perspective.<sup>12</sup> Strategy is all organization and the conduction of actions and ideas, where the aim is to achieve an objective from a given situation. All the procedures involved in the teaching-learning process are strategies, such as the development of aims, the determination of content, the methodology and the evaluation proposal, since they all lead to learning.<sup>16</sup> However, it is common to consider strategy only as the methods or activities chosen to assist in the process.

The methodology used by the professor can generate a critical consciousness or a faithful memory, a universalist vision or a narrow and one-sided view, a thirst to learn for the pleasure of learning and solving problems or distress for learning just to get a prize or avoid punishment.<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the effort is compensatory when establishing activities that may later be remembered by the students as contributions to the formation of an individual able to reflect on the reality that is experienced in the moment. This construction leads, according to the theoretical framework of this study, to the good sense constructed by the student, which is composed of fragments of criticality that emerge in the context experienced. Despite the importance of good sense being constructed, not everything in the context of the common sense of the student is naive, elements of comprehension and behavior that are critical and fair can occur in those moments.<sup>10</sup>

The evaluation requires a democratic stance from the education system and the professor.<sup>10</sup> Thus, to improve the teaching and learning, the professor must constantly be attentive to the group, and must have the ability to evaluate each student individually and perceive them. There is no way to develop the teaching without those involved undergoing an evaluation, after all, the aim of this teaching is the formation of nurses that are able meet the needs of the population.<sup>18</sup>

The evaluation carried out in the teaching-learning process studied showed characteristics of a proposal based on active methods by allowing the student to embrace new knowledge and take advantage of new ways of learning.<sup>2</sup> This is because there are several factors that must be considered in the formation of nursing undergraduate students for them to achieve competence for the development of mental health care that encompasses the LDB, ethical-legal precepts of the profession and psychosocial concepts. This makes



the teaching-learning process of mental health nursing rather complex, since much pedagogical and conceptual restructuring has been necessary to take account of the historical and social context of the care transition.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This study is justified by the historical moment that is occurring in the area of mental health, characterized by intense changes in the care, which have significantly influenced the formation of professionals. Therefore, the need to share, to divulge a process of teaching and learning in nursing is understood as a way to foster discussion between professors and to instigate the development of more research on the subject studied. It is hoped that this study contributes with others that arise on the teaching, mental health and nursing themes, and encourage discussions between professors, students and healthcare professionals of the services about how the teaching of mental health in Brazil has been taking place, specifically those strategies based on active methodologies.

The main limitation of this study is the short timeline of the descriptive and evaluative results in the teaching-learning process of the nursing degree discipline of mental health, which does not cover the transformations prior to the period of the study. It was concluded that, despite the adversities, that which was observed in the teaching of mental health is consistent with the ideas emphasized by Luckesi, the framework this study, in relation to the concepts of education, human being, professor, student, education, school, curriculum and evaluation, in which the professor strives to provide a differentiated learning process in order to result in meaningful learning.

It is suggested, from the information obtained from this study, that the nursing professors maintain and intensify discussions that result in updating the pedagogic process and in the development of skills for addressing active methodologies. It is especially important for professors in the area of mental health, to utilize the most varied strategies and all the care spaces arising from the psychiatric reform, to deconstruct the social imaginary and the stigma of criminality and danger attributed to the person with a mental disorder, creating the psychosocial view that considers the person a citizen with the same rights and duties as everyone, worthy of respect and adequate care.

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