

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN NURSING AT THE FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF SANTA MARIA: TRAJECTORY AND RESULTS

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ABSTRACT

A quantitative, descriptive, exploratory study based on documentation that aims to report the history of the Graduate Program in Nursing (PPGENF), Federal University of Santa Maria according to the national scenario. The data was collected through queries to different sites on the Internet and secretary of PPGENF. The program was created in 2006, and in the first triennium there has been an increase in the number of vacancies and candidates, and concentration of the publications was given in qualis B1 and A2. Actions have been developed such as discussions, seminars, conferences and workshops aimed at strengthening the program and subsequent integration of faculty/student, academic and professional nursing. This program is contributing to the expansion and strengthening of nursing in the Rio Grande as its egresses are inserted in institutions of higher education, or PhD in health care public and private.

Descriptors: Nursing. Graduate study. Study. Education, Graduate.

RESUMO

Estudo quantitativo, descritivo, exploratório, em base documental, tendo como objetivo relatar a história e trajetória do Programa de Pós-graduação em Enfermagem (PPGENF) da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria, de acordo com o panorama nacional. Os dados foram obtidos por meio de consultas a diferentes sites na internet e secretaria do PPGENF. O programa foi criado em 2006, sendo que, no primeiro triênio, houve uma ampliação no número de vagas e candidatos, e a concentração das publicações ocorreu nos Qualis B1 e A2. Foram desenvolvidas ações, como rodas de conversa, seminários, jornadas e workshops, direcionadas ao fortalecimento do programa para a integração de docentes/discentes, acadêmicos e profissionais de Enfermagem. Este programa está contribuindo para a expansão e o fortalecimento da Enfermagem no Rio Grande do Sul, na medida em que seus egressos estão inseridos em instituições de ensino superior, em doutoramento ou, ainda, em instituições de saúde públicas e privadas.

Descritores: Enfermagem. Ensino. Educação de pós-graduação.

Título: Programa de Pós-Graduação em Enfermagem da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria: trajetória e resultados.

RESUMEN

Estudio cuatitativo, descriptivo de registro, con base documental, cuyo objetivo es contar la trayectoria histórica del Programa de Postgrado en Enfermería (PPGENF) de la Universidad Federal de Santa María, de acuerdo a la escena nacional. Los datos fueron obtenidos a través de búsquedas en diferentes sites de internet y en la secretaria del PPGENF. El programa fue creado en 2006 y en el primer trienio hubo una amplitud en el número de vacantes y candidatos, y la concentración de publicaciones fue en qualis B1 y A2. Fueron desarrolladas acciones tales como conversaciones, seminarios, jornadas y workshops direccionadas al mejoramiento del programa y consecuente integración de docentes/discentes, académico y profesionales de enfermería. Este programa contribuye a la expansión y al fortalecimiento de la enfermería en Rio Grande ya que sus egresados están insertados en instituciones de enseñanza superior, en doctoramiento o instituciones de salud pública y privada.

Descriptores: Enfermería. Enseñanza. Educación de postgrado.

Título: Programa de postgrado en enfermería de la Universidad Federal de Santa María: trayectoria y resultados.

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INTRODUCTION

The production of knowledge in nursing occurs especially in graduate studies, coupled with higher education systems and qualification of persons with a high academic background; these are central elements in the economic and social development that makes this society contemporary⁽¹⁾. In addition to these elements, include governmental and non-governmental investments in professional qualification, which has a direct impact on the increase and expansion of graduate courses⁽²⁾.

Within graduate programs in nursing, the training of researchers was consolidated after the establishment of the Master program in 1972 (Ana Nery School of Nursing, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro) and the PhD program in 1981 (School of Nursing, University of São Paulo)⁽³⁻⁴⁾. Graduate programs contribute to the research in Nursing in Brazil⁽⁵⁾ and they are expanding throughout the country with a concentration of courses in the South and Southeast of the country⁽⁶⁾.

From the data presented on the CAPES website (Coordination of Improvement of Personnel of Superior Level) regarding the recommended and recognized graduate courses, the southern region has eight master's programs in Nursing (seven academic programs and one professional program) and four PhD programs in Nursing⁽³⁾. These courses are distributed at the following universities: Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Federal University of Paraná (UFP), State University of Maringá (UEM), Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS), Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG), Federal University of Pelotas (UFPEL), and Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM).

The state of Rio Grande do Sul (RS) offers four graduate programs in Nursing, and of these, three are Phd programs (UFRGS, FURG and UFPEL). The recently established graduate program at UFSM offers only one Master's program.

The UFSM was established in 1960 as a result of the taking higher education to the interior towns of the country. It is located in the center of the state of RS, 290 km from Porto Alegre. The municipality of Santa Maria became an important hub for service provisions, especially educational services at all levels⁽⁷⁾.

The first graduate course at UFSM was the Master's degree program in Education in 1970.

However, it was from 2006 to 2009 that the institution increased in more than 50% the offer of graduate level courses, totaling 14 specialization courses, 36 graduate programs, of which 35 are Master's courses (one of them is professional) and 17 are doctoral programs⁽⁷⁾.

This outlook reflects the development and advancement of public policies for graduate programs in Brazil. Similarly, this development may be due to changes in society that brought public policies to the center of the socio-political discussion⁽⁸⁾.

The Office for Graduate Studies and Research (PRGP) is an administrative subunit of the Office of the Provost and it is responsible for establishing the guidelines and policy goals of graduate courses at UFSM, which are set by the central administration with the academic research community and based on the national regulation for graduate studies. Among the goals, the PRGP aims to encourage qualification of faculty members and expand and consolidate Graduate Programs and Research Groups at UFSM⁽⁹⁾.

Amidst this scenario, the Graduate Program in Nursing (PPGENF/UFSM) was established in 2006 and its goal is to prepare students and nurses to work as professors and to conduct research. Thus, the aim of this study is to report the trajectory of PPGENF/UFSM aiming to demonstrate the growth and trends of the program within the national scenario.

METHODOLOGY

In this quantitative, descriptive, exploratory and document-based study we conducted a survey of the historical trajectory of the Graduate Program in Nursing at the Federal University of Santa Maria.

The data were obtained by consulting the websites of the program itself, UFSM, the PRGP and the Lattes Platform. The data from the CAPES website included the items assessment and statistics (GEOCAPES). Data collection occurred in December 2011 and covered the period from January 2007 to August 2011. This time frame is justified as the first cohort of students of the Master's degree program in Nursing at UFSM began in 2007 – admission occurred in 2006.

A spreadsheet was used for the data collection, which contained information about the Gradu-

ate Programs in Nursing in Brazil, the number of master's and PhD programs by region of the country and the following specific information from PPGENF/UFSM: number of professors (permanent members and collaborators), number of openings during the admission process, number of admissions and graduates per year, time of qualification level and thesis defense, and concentration areas. A descriptive analysis of the data was obtained by absolute (n) and percentage (%) frequency with the aid of software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 18.

With regard to ethical aspects, the study was not submitted to the Research Ethics Committee because it is documentary research and the content is of a public nature.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The national scenario of graduate courses in Nursing is shown in Table 1. It can be seen that there is a concentration of these programs in the Southeast region of the country.

The data indicate that the Southeast region offers more graduate courses, which emphasizes the historical process of qualification of Brazilian Nursing. In the 1920s, nurses graduated at Anna Nery School were granted fellowships to take graduate courses in the United States; consequently, early investments in the professional development regarding graduate studies occurred in the Southeast, which was a driving force for the establishment of graduate education in other regions of the country. However, resources and funding are concentrated in some regions, which produces an

imbalance in the distribution of Nursing graduate programs in Brazil⁽¹⁰⁾.

Nevertheless, there are trends and prospects for growth and development of graduate education in Nursing. In this context, the provision of resources in the southern region is outstanding. Three new programs were established, one doctoral program (FURG) and two Master's programs, one of them at PPGENF/UFSM, which is the focus of this study.

In the wake of growth trends and development, the National Graduate Plan for 2011-2020 establishes graduate policies and research in Brazil and assesses growth prospects, forecasts and guidelines for the future. This plan was developed alongside the new National Education Plan, which includes goals for graduate studies, and it represents the advancement of knowledge at this academic level⁽¹¹⁾.

Graduate Program in Nursing at the Federal University of Santa Maria

The PPGENF/UFSM, established in 2006, offers the community the Master's degree course in Academic Nursing in the program called Care, Education and Work in Nursing and Health, with two concentration areas: Care and Education in Nursing and Health; and Work and Management in Nursing and Health⁽¹²⁾.

The PPGENF/UFSM is strategically located in the center of the RS and it strengthens the center, north, northwest, and west regions of the state with regard to the demand for professional qualification of nurses with the purpose of offering

Table 1 - Distribution of graduate courses in Nursing (Master's and PhD) assessed in the triennium 2007-2009, by region of the country. Santa Maria, RS, 2010.

Region	M		D		Total M/D	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Southeast*	17	50.00	10	66.67	27	55.10
South	7	20.59	3	20.00	10	20.41
Northeast	8	23.53	2	13.33	10	20.41
Center-West	2	5.88	0	0	2	4.08
Total	34	100.00	15	100.00	49	100.00

Source: CAPES website (item: ratio of recognized and recommended courses, updated on 19/02/2010). * Two are professional master's courses. Legend: M: Master's degree; D: doctoral degree

a better quality of life and health, as well as the full exercise of citizenship.

The program is located at the Center of Health Sciences (CCS) at UFSM, University Campus, next to the Department of Nursing. The facilities consist of classrooms (equipped with audiovisual equipment), meeting rooms, coordination office, secretary, auditorium, computer lab, and study and reading rooms (equipped with computers and a library sector). In addition, the UFSM participates in the Web of Science agreement and CAPES Journal Portal in partnership with other institutions. Professors and students encourage the use of the CAPES Journal Portal, which can be accessed from the computers at the institution or from any other computer, upon permission for free. The use of the portal is encouraged due the possibility of immediate access to worldwide scientific literature and a selection of important sources of academic information.

Currently, the PPGENF/UFSM has 15 professors (14 nurses, 1 psychologist). The distribution of faculty members over the years can be seen in Graph 1. It is noticed that, over the past few years, the faculty members have been numerically constant⁽¹²⁾. Similarly, it is evident that the number of professors is in accordance with the criteria established by CAPES regarding the required number of professors⁽¹³⁾.

It should be noted that the criteria for accreditation and dis-accreditation of professors were established in accordance with the definition of the profile of professors, based on the evaluation

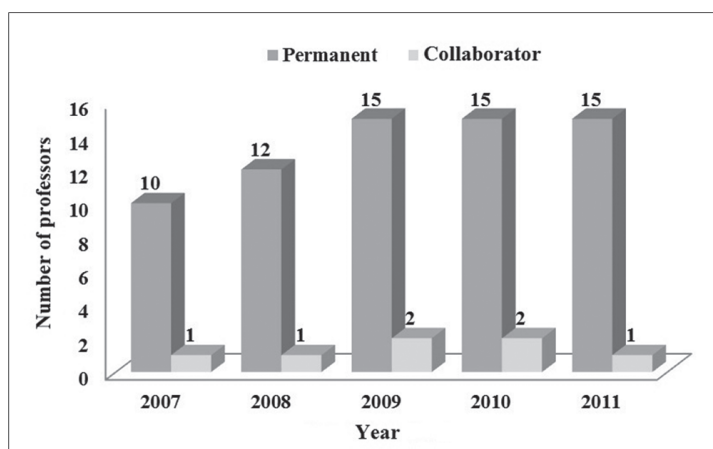
criteria of CAPES in the area of Health for the triennium 2007-2009.

The professors and students are placed in research areas and assigned to research groups registered at the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). Among them, the groups are as follows: Group of Studies and Research in Nursing and Health – GEPES; Care, Health and Nursing; Work, Health, Education and Nursing; Health Care of Individuals, Families and Society; Group of Studies and Research in Anthropology of Body and Health – GEPACS; and Center for Applied Statistics. It is noteworthy that some professors are part of other groups at the university and at other higher education institutions such as the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ), University of São Paulo (USP) and the State University of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ)⁽¹²⁾.

According to the triennial assessment 2007-2009 concerning graduate professors, investment in the qualification of the professors, such as access to post-doctoral courses at international centers, is needed and this is one of the challenges to consolidate Nursing in the country⁽¹⁴⁾.

The curriculum structure of PPGENF/UFSM includes 12 required courses, four elective courses, eight curricular activities (Oriented Teaching I and II, Special Topics, Co-orientation for Research Initiation and Research Seminars) and writing the dissertation, totaling 30 credits at the Master's degree level⁽¹²⁾.

Up to the present, four admission processes have occurred. In the triennial assessment 2007-2009, the



Graph 1 - Distribution per year of permanent professors and collaborators. Santa Maria, RS, 2011.

increase in the number of openings for PPGENF/UFSM was: 11, 13, 13 and 22 openings for nurses in the years 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010, respectively. Details of the admission process are shown in Table 2.

The data referent to admission and the graduate levels are shown in Graph 2.

In compliance with the recommendations of CAPES, Master's students are encouraged by the coordination to conclude the course in 24 months. In the first cohort, 90.90% of dissertations were defended within the proposed time frame; and the second cohort reached the percentage of 76.92%.

To expand graduate courses, dedication and commitment of all those involved in the process is important. Be it at the individual or collective level, practices should stimulate teaching quality of masters and doctors who work in a variety of contexts⁽¹⁴⁾, impacting practice and therefore, the advancement of Nursing.

Regarding publication, Figure 3 shows the distribution of articles according to the classifica-

tion of journals in the Qualis evaluation system proposed by CAPES.

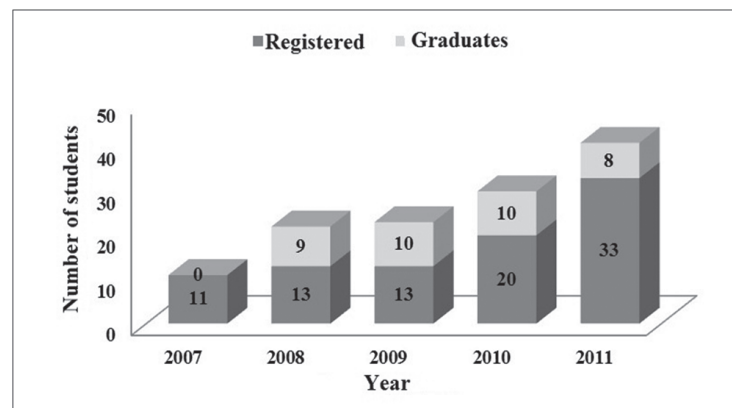
It is evident that the concentration of publications is among the Qualis B1 and A2, which means that research is being published in top-rated and high impact journals. However, a significant number of articles are published journals with low impact factor according to Qualis, which needs to be revised and improved.

It is observed that the publication process during graduate school is an important commitment because it improves the visibility of the research being conducted. However, in order to develop research in graduate school it is important to broaden the scope to embrace major trends and themes, establishing priorities in the process of nursing research. Thus, one must create and renew research by considering the needs and national and international demands⁽¹⁵⁾ towards the advancement of science. Research should have scientific content and methodological rigor in order to produce reliable

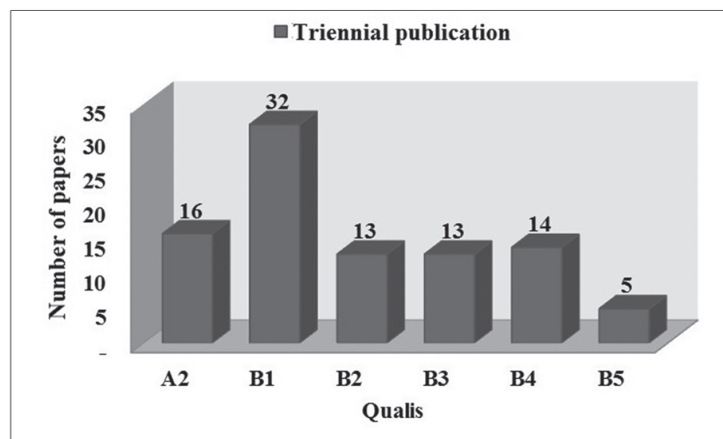
Table 2 – Distribution of openings in the admission processes for the Master's program at PPGENF/UFSM. Santa Maria, RS, 2010.

Year/admission	Openings	Applicants	Applicants/opening	Selected applicants	Enrolled
2006/2007	11	73	6,64	17	11
2007/2008	13	40	3,08	13	13
2008/2009	13	48	3,69	17	13
2009/2010	22	51	2,32	22	20
2010/2011	42	89	2,12	33	33

Source: Secretary of PPGENF/UFSM



Graph 2 - Distribution per year students. Santa Maria, RS, 2011.



Graph 3 – Production of PPGENF/UFSM, data available from the triennial assessment at the CAPES website. Santa Maria, RS, 2011.

and consistent data that contribute to the growth of research in nursing.

The present study aimed to understand the systematized productions conducted at graduate school, which is an important process in the evaluation of the course. The results show that the Master's program is in accordance with the new perspectives of health and health care, and the process and organization of work. Accordingly, there are trends in knowledge production in which research follows the paradigm shifts in the context of health and nursing⁽¹⁶⁾.

It is also worth noting, with regard to publications and more specifically to the publications in renowned journals with higher impact factors in Qualis, that a more technical approach is being developed, i.e., the potentiality of articles for publication in international journals with high impact factors is being taken into consideration⁽¹⁷⁾.

Master's and doctoral programs are responsible for the production of the knowledge, stimulating growth of graduate programs⁽⁸⁾, providing visibility of knowledge in the field, qualifying professionals in the areas of teaching, research and management, consolidating and innovating new technologies⁽⁸⁾.

Over the course of three years, several actions were taken to strengthen the program and engage faculty members/students, academics and professionals in Nursing. Professors, doctors from other institutions with well-established graduate programs, have been invited to participate in

defenses, discussions, seminars, conferences and workshops. In this context, the following actions are relevant: workshops to train researchers how to use the Lattes platform and CAPES Journal Portal; courses in bibliographic research/information sources on the internet in the field of health; workshops/discussions about types of care and specialist orientation in health services.

These events were organized by professors and students of the PPGENF/UFSM and promoted by the program and they received support from other offices of the University. It is important to point out the engagement of nursing students in these actions and initiatives of students connected to the Tutorial Education Program in Nursing (PET).

In November 2009, the International Seminar "Bioethics and Public Health: Challenges and Prospects" funded by CNPq, received financial support from the PRPGP, the Center for Health Sciences of UFSM and from the Department of Nursing of the University Hospital of Santa Maria.

The committee for this event was organized by professors and students of PPGENF, and monitors represented by students from PET and nursing undergraduates, which shows the engagement of all to achieve a common purpose. It is noteworthy that this event, which lasted three days, brought speakers from Canada and Argentina, as well as from other Brazilian institutions, and poster session in which 164 posters were presented.

Events such as these allow the effective participation of undergraduate students, encouraging

them and preparing them for graduate school. It is believed that these investments have facilitated prospective master's students, enhancing and promoting reflections about the world from new perspectives.

A study from the CNPq investments to support research in Nursing found that there are large gaps to be filled in the field of Nursing, which require policies that motivates researchers to search for opportunities, challenges and possibilities. A political agenda focused on research is needed to promote joint actions of leadership together with the Universities and representatives in the field of Nursing to conduct nursing research coherent with the real needs experienced by our profession in the Brazilian healthcare scenario⁽¹⁸⁾.

It is noteworthy that these practices corroborate the development of graduate studies and the combination of individual and collective efforts. The influence of these movements is evident in the triennial assessment, which pointed to the growth, strength and visibility of the graduate Nursing courses, toward maintaining or increasing their concepts⁽¹⁴⁾.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

From the data of the historical trajectory of PPGENF/UFSM, it may conclude that the program has contributed to the training of researchers in the field of nursing, particularly in the interior of the state of RS. Additionally, this program represents one of the landmarks of expansion and strengthening of Brazilian Nursing, insofar that the graduates are placed in institutions of higher education, doctoral programs, or work in public and private health institutions. The program has potentiality and local, regional and national challenges, which corroborate the consolidation of research, education and nursing care.

This study is a first approximation of the data that show the historical trajectory at a moment in which the program completes its first three years. Further research should be conducted to compare and complement this reality. It is important to understand this scenario in a continuous manner, with view to the excellence of this program, which is reflected in the advancement of nursing science in the production of knowledge and the strengthening of national and international research.

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