ACADEMIC MONITORING IN NURSING:
PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHER-ADVISOR AND STUDENT-MONITOR

Monitoria acadêmica na enfermagem: percepções do docente-orientador e do discente-monitor
Seguimiento académico en enfermería: percepciones del profesor-asesor y alumno-monitor

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ABSTRACT
Objectives: to know the conceptions of professors-advisors and students-monitors about academic monitoring; describe the issues related to the development and preparation of the student-monitor for academic monitoring, identifying potentialities and limiting factors; to analyze the theoretical-pedagogical aspects that support academic monitoring. Method: a descriptive study, qualitative, of the field research type, carried out at the Faculty of Nursing of the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro. The participants were 11 teachers-advisors of monitoring and 16 students-monitors. Data collection took place through semi-structured interviews between June and July 2021 and the analysis was thematic. The work was approved by the Ethics Committee. Results: two categories emerged: perceptions of professors-advisors and students-monitors about academic monitoring. Conclusion: student-monitors and professors-advisors understand academic monitoring as a training space. Teacher-advisors emphasize the preparation of content for the student-monitor to assume the role. However, some monitors do not recognize such preparation. The analysis detected the insufficiency of theoretical-pedagogical discussion on academic monitoring.

KEYWORDS: Nursing; Education, Nursing; Mentoring.

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RESUMO


DESCRITORES: Enfermagem; Educação em enfermagem; Tutoria.

RESUMEN

Objetivos: conocer las concepciones de profesores-asesores y estudiantes-monitor sobre el seguimiento académico; describir los temas relacionados con el desarrollo y preparación del estudiante-monitor para el seguimiento académico, identificando potencialidades y factores limitantes; analizar los aspectos teórico-pedagógicos que sustentan el seguimiento académico. Método: estudio descriptivo, cualitativo, de tipo investigación de campo, realizado en la Facultad de Enfermería de la Universidad del Estado de Rio de Janeiro. Los participantes fueron 11 docentes-asesores de seguimiento y 16 alumnos-monitores. La recolección de datos ocurrió a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas entre junio y julio de 2021 y el análisis fue temático. El trabajo fue aprobado por el Comité de Ética. Resultados: surgieron dos categorías: percepciones de profesores-asesores y estudiantes-monitor sobre el seguimiento académico. Conclusión: los estudiantes-monitor y los profesores-asesores entienden el seguimiento académico como un espacio de formación. Los docentes-asesores enfatizan la preparación de contenidos para que el estudiante-monitor asuma el rol. Sin embargo, algunos monitores no reconocen dicha preparación. El análisis detectó la insuficiencia de la discusión teórico-pedagógica sobre el seguimiento académico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Enfermería; Educación en Enfermería; Tutoría.

INTRODUCTION

The object of this study consists of the perceptions of the teacher-supervisor and the student-monitor about academic monitoring in the nursing course. Acting as a tutor in Nursing Education at the undergraduate Nursing School of the Rio de Janeiro State University (ENF/UERJ) aroused the interest in deepening the theme.

Academic monitoring is a strategy that contributes to the strengthening of teaching-learning in higher education through which the student-monitor and the student-monitored have the opportunity to deepen knowledge, develop theoretical and practical skills and clarify doubts, reflecting on a more satisfactory learning experience.1

In higher education in Brazil, this academic modality has existed since 1968 by Law No. 5.540, while at UERJ the function of monitor was created in 1985.2 From the perspective of ENF/UERJ monitors, academic monitoring is an opportunity to stimulate teacher training that enables an exchange of knowledge, as it reduces knowledge fragmentation, with repercussions on interpersonal relationships. 1

The academic monitoring contributes for the student-monitor to deepen his own knowledge about the disciplinary contents, allied to the approximation with the teaching practice. However, help with the subject is the main reason why the teacher offers a monitoring position, showing a distance from preparation for teaching in practice.3-4

The conservative model still present in part of the practices of university professors is an aspect that weakens preparation for teaching through tutoring. The use of reproductive practices and the view of monitors as assistants in activities that do not express the real role of the monitor in Higher Education Institutions (HEI) hinder significant learning.5

The professors understand the relationship between monitoring and preparation for teaching. On the other hand, they are not concerned with the training of the monitor, or even express that this is not their main concern. This is reflected in the scarcity of literature on the theoretical-pedagogical aspects that support academic tutoring, which makes this study relevant.6

In view of this, the following objectives were set:

• To know the conceptions of the teacher-supervisors and the student-monitors about academic monitoring;
• To describe the issues related to the development and preparation of the student-monitor for academic monitoring, identifying potentialities and limitations;
• To analyze the theoretical-pedagogical aspects that sustain the academic monitoring, from the perception of the teacher-supervisor and the student-monitor.
METHODOLOGY

A descriptive study, of qualitative approach, of the field research type. The setting was the ENF/UERJ. In this research, the participants were: teacher-supervisors and student-monitors. The selected teachers were those who were enrolled in the academic monitoring program for the nursing faculty and who were coordinators or responsible for the orientation of nursing students in the monitoring exercise for more than one academic semester. The exclusion criterion was absence from work during the data collection period.

The group formed by undergraduate nursing students was composed of those who acted as monitors in the various subareas offered by the nursing faculty and other faculties that offer subjects for the undergraduate nursing course. The exclusion criterion was acting as a monitor for less than a semester.

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews via videoconference platform. The script presented specific questions for each group of participants, which were 11 teacher-supervisors and 16 student-monitors. The sample was closed due to data saturation. To preserve the privacy of the participants, the interviews were identified with the initials P or M, followed by Arabic numerals according to the order in which they were conducted.

The data analysis was thematic, composed of three phases. In the pre-analysis, after reading, we marked similar terms related to the research objectives, called Meaning Units (MU).

During the exploration of the material, the units of meaning (MU) were coded, aggregated and quantified in Registration Units (RU), which express the cut of the research, using Microsoft Office Excel® software.

Finally, the treatment of the results obtained and interpreted by means of synthesis and simple statistical operations generated categories. In the systematization of the statements, two major categories emerged, being subdivided into statements of the teacher-supervisors and student-monitors.

This study was approved by the Ethics and Research Committee (CEP) of the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, according to Resolutions 466/2012 and 520/2016.8-9 With CAAE: 47134721.6.0000.5282 and opinion number 4.747.179, on May 31, 2021.

RESULTS

Characterization

In the characterization of the faculty members-mentors, it was observed that all are PhDs, which defines the maximum post-graduate qualification of the faculty. There is a predominance of academic monitoring coordinators, with up to 10 years. It is noteworthy that four of them do not know how long the subarea has been offering monitoring and, with the exception of three, the others have not acted as student-monitors during their undergraduate studies.

The time spent by student-monitors is predominantly between 13 and 24 months, corresponding to a maximum contract of two years. It is also observed that student-monitors remain in the activity even after the end of their contract. There is a demand for monitorship in practically all periods, with a predominance of monitors in the third and seventh periods of the undergraduate course.

The difference between being a monitor for the first time and having already worked as an academic monitor in another sub-area is small, highlighting the students’ interest in this type of activity.

Teachers’ perceptions about academic monitoring

For the development of academic monitoring, the teacher-supervisor sees that it is important for the monitor to present some attitudes, skills and knowledge. In this sense, they point to: interest in pursuing a teaching career, responsibility, autonomy, academic performance, and knowledge of the subfield’s content, in addition to mastery of computer programs and applications.

One of the first things is to want to be a monitor. Another aspect is if he wants to develop the teaching profession. (P8)

Previous teaching experiences in guiding other projects and the experience of being a monitor during your training are also potentialities.

It is in my history, I was a monitor myself. I was very involved with this kind of activity, believing in the enormous importance of monitoring. (P1)

The difficulties that arise in this process are related to the little time available for the student-monitor to dedicate to the exercise of monitoring, due to the dense workload of the nursing undergraduate course at UERJ. The pandemic context imposed difficulties in the conduction of the mentorship due to the need of physical and social distancing, with paralysis of the face-to-face teaching activities.

Performing the functions of student-monitor requires preparation, both in the deepening of content and in the pedagogical perspective. Moreover, the student-monitors are also prepared for the formalities related to inviting professionals to participate in the subarea’s classes, as well as to develop the tutoring of new monitors.

Always the older monitor training the younger one (P10)

Everything is discussed, including the objective of that activity. [...] When the monitor is going to correct something, I say what I intended so that we can have a kind of basic template. (P7)

On the other hand, there are professors-supervisors who report that there is no preparation for the students to develop the academic monitoring, leaving them free to conduct it.
There was no specific preparation, no. (P4)

What we do a lot is: I send the activities, the monitors receive them. If they have any doubts, they can come to me. (P9)

The development of academic monitoring by the student-monitor includes diversified activities. Pedagogical tasks include preparing and applying exercises, answering questions, guiding assignments and teaching classes. The administrative activities are controlling class attendance, organizing grade spreadsheets, writing reports, and using the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). And finally, as complementary work, we identify the participation in research groups and presentation of papers in scientific and cultural events.

I usually ask the monitors to participate in our (research) group. [...] I always encourage and guide them to do works to present in events and congresses. (P8)

The reasons that led the teacher-mentors to request monitors for the subarea they teach revolve around the concern with the academic performance of the class and the incongruence between the time needed to teach the content and the amount of class time available. Added to this, the interest of students to begin monitoring in the subarea were also cited as motivations.

Some nursing students came to me to be volunteer monitors (P9)

The teachers see the monitoring as a teaching experience that provides an opportunity for a better understanding of the contents and contributes to the student’s social formation and development of relational and pedagogical skills. In this context, the student-monitors add some functions, such as: supporting the learning of regular students; being the link between teacher and class; bringing the class closer to the context, and being an integral part of the teaching team of the subarea.

It is like teaching under supervision (P5).

Then he will develop communication, interpretation, critical analysis, thinking, decision making, writing, elaboration of documents and reports. (P10)

 [...] a support for the discipline and also an approximation between the student and the monitor. I think that the monitor makes a bridge between teacher and student, brings them closer. And also approximates and demystifies the discipline for those students. (P7)

Perceptions of student-monitors about academic monitoring

Some student-monitors understand academic monitoring as a space to maintain the contents taught in the current subareas. Added to this, academic monitoring is seen as pedagogical support to regular students, pedagogical support to the faculty advisor and intermediary between them.

Within the bureaucratic part, it was the support to the teachers [...]. There was the student support part, which is the coolest. [...] The monitorship for me, in this period, was this bridge between the subject and the student. So much so that any doubt they didn’t go to the teacher, they went through the monitor. So it is the opportunity to connect the student to the subject. (M12)

The motivations for applying for a monitoring position encompass the positive experience when the student-monitor took the subarea, the expectation of helping other students with the explanation of content of the academic period, the desire to pursue a university teaching career, and the expectation of receiving a university-sponsored scholarship.

Helping people to study, to do well, having someone who is also a student to answer their questions, who understands their demands. That was it: to enjoy teaching and to be able to help another student. (M1)

The development of monitoring involves several activities. The pedagogical ones were widely cited, as were the administrative and complementary activities. Among the complementary activities are participation in and organization of events.

There are the bureaucratic activities that are more the schedule part, [...] At the end of the semester, close attendance and grade report. (M12)

We are also in charge of organizing the events. Every year there is a general workshop that we open and do an extension event. (M16)

Among the weaknesses perceived by the student-monitors are the difficulty in coordinating study time and individual activities with the students’ availability, the thought of being unable to guide due to lack of knowledge of the subject or of teaching strategies, tiredness due to routine, and the lack of creativity.

Difficulty to explain the doubt that we ourselves have, because you are also just a student. [...] Sometimes it is such a specific doubt that you say “I will look it up”. (M10)

The main difficulty was tiredness with the things of the period. [...] For me it was challenging because I am not a creative person, so I had to learn to be. (M12)

The pedagogical difficulties highlighted are the little proximity with the other teachers in the subarea, the development of activities in a virtual learning environment, and the need to standardize the discourse when the subarea has many monitors.
Internet difficulty, instability. First contact not being face-to-face, the expression says a lot. Unfortunately, online there is no way to capture this. At home there are people who make noise. (M6)

Among the facilities presented, consistent with the skills to be a monitor, are those related to personal, pedagogical, and team relationship issues. Among the personal issues is the enjoyment of teaching and the development of tutoring through virtual mediation, which helped overcome the shame of speaking in public.

The ease in the pedagogical process is expressed by the affinity with the contents approached in the monitoring since regular student, proximity of the contents with nursing, and facilitated communication between the monitor and the class.

[... ] sometimes the student can't understand and we end up using an easier language. (M2)

Aspects related to pedagogical and content preparation were also emphasized by the monitors. Such preparation was related to didactic elements and technical content. In counterpoint, there are monitors who point out weaknesses in the preparation.

In my first monitoring period, she [the teacher] attended all my monitorships. She would tell me what I left out, if I made a mistake, she would correct me. (M10)

I should have had more preparation to be a monitor. [...] it could be better clarified by the teacher in the beginning what the activities are, what the role of the monitor is. (M15)

DISCUSSION

The nursing undergraduate program at UERJ is a full-time program that requires academic work that articulates the knowledge necessary to achieve the purpose of critical education.10 The amount of work, the adaptation to a full-time program, and the social issues of the students interfere with the study time outside the classroom, creating difficulties for the teaching-learning process.

As a strategy to face these difficulties, the professors sought to offer academic monitoring. At the same time, the students who perceive themselves as having teaching facilities and for identifying the difficulties that their classmates have experienced seek to be present in this process.

Teacher-supervisors and student-monitors share the perception that academic monitoring is a formative activity for the student-monitor, involving skills that can be applied in teaching and in the professional practice of nurses.11

The student-monitor must know the assignments of the disciplines in the curriculum and the bibliographies that support the discipline to which he is linked. This knowledge path must be mediated by the teacher-supervisor. Therefore, organization and orientation are important aspects in this process.12

Each teacher-supervisor defines the activities to be developed by the student-monitor according to the programmatic content. For such, it is necessary that the instructor prepares the student-monitor in the performance of such activities. In order to develop skills and have aptitude in the function, the preparation must also involve the content covered and the pedagogical conception that supports the teaching-learning process.13

The exercise of the monitoring function is a space to think and apply teaching strategies, in addition to maintaining contact with the subject. Considering the clarification of doubts as one of the roles of the student-monitor, the technical and didactic capacities are equally necessary.12 Moreover, the teacher-supervisors of ENF/UERJ also highlighted the knowledge of digital technologies that the monitor must have, considering their frequent use in current educational practice.

However, the teaching activity of the monitor goes beyond the execution of the educational action and the direct contact with the students. Teaching also involves planning and evaluating its results. These stages of the educational process make it possible to retrieve and apply theoretical knowledge and discuss the facilities and difficulties in the teaching-learning process.13

Participating in the preparation of the subarea planning and discussing contents with the teacher-supervisor are part of the student-monitor’s educational process when they are supported by a problematizing theoretical-pedagogical conception.6 When this does not happen, the tasks are performed freely and without guidance, which creates an impression of neutrality in the process, which is not real. Every pedagogical process is not neutral, because it is implied in a conception of the world.13

But teaching is not restricted only to the triad planning-execution-evaluation of the educational action. It also includes administrative activities that make up the functional aspect of academic monitoring. If these activities are disconnected from the pedagogical objective, they become merely bureaucratic, thus distancing them from the pedagogical praxis that promotes action-reflection.15

The ENF/UERJ curriculum, in effect since 1996, adopts the problematizing conception, based on educator Paulo Freire. This proposal is presented to undergraduates since the first period of the course.14 However, the theoretical-pedagogical aspects that sustain the teaching-learning process of tutoring were not emphasized by the actors of this process, except by two non-nursing faculty members, who highlighted the uniqueness of the pedagogical conception adopted by the UERJ Nursing School.

The three pillars that support teaching in higher education are: teaching, research, and extension. In the National Curriculum Guidelines for the Undergraduate Nursing Course, it is the duty of universities to create monitorships; scientific initiation programs; extension programs; complementary studies and courses in other related areas.17
In line with this, it is part of the role of the teacher-supervisors to encourage the participation of their students in academic events for the purpose of dissemination and use of knowledge. Despite this, only a small part of the teacher-supervisors or of the student-monitors of the ENF/UERJ reported the dissemination of their experiences in monitoring in scientific events.

Another aspect to be highlighted is the proximity of the student-monitors with other students as a facilitator of the teaching-learning process. Such affinities are marked by the age group, the language used and the condition of being a learner in the communication among peers. The interpersonal relationship between the actors involved in academic monitoring cooperates with the growth of the student-monitor as an educator.

Despite these facilities, difficulties also arise in this process. The short time available for the student-monitor to dedicate to the exercise of monitoring is a common complaint among teacher-supervisors and student-monitors. This occurs due to the dense workload of the nursing undergraduate course at UERJ.

Marked by the need for social isolation, the academic year of 2020 presents difficulties characteristic of the pandemic period. The adaptation of the work process to virtual environments represents a challenging change for student-monitors and faculty advisors, considering that to employ technology, it is necessary to have resources such as digital devices and internet access.

To overcome this situation, UERJ instituted the emergency aid for digital inclusion and acquisition of teaching materials for all undergraduate students who are in a situation of digital vulnerability to attend the PAE.

Working in academic monitoring, as a teacher-supervisor or student-monitor, is seen as positive by these individuals, despite the non-conformities involving this activity at ENF/UERJ.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In seeking to understand the conception of academic monitoring, we sought both the view of the teacher-supervisors and that of the student-monitors, in order to compare them, since it is common to find in the literature the view of only one of the parties involved in this process.

The present study identified the aspects that the teacher-supervisor considers important for the undergraduate to develop the monitoring process and the orientations given for the exercise of this, described the perception of the student-monitor about the orientations of the teacher-supervisor for the performance of the academic monitoring process and analyzed the theoretical-pedagogical aspects that sustain the academic monitoring process, from the perception of the teacher-supervisor and the student-monitor. Thus, the objectives of the research were achieved.

Despite the fact that both the teacher-supervisors and the student-monitors understand academic monitoring as a space for formation, the analysis of the material detected insufficient discussion of the theoretical-pedagogical aspects that sustain it.

In what concerns the orientation for the student-monitor to take on the function, teacher-mentors emphasize the preparation of content, leaving pedagogical orientations in second place. However, some monitors do not recognize such actions as preparation.

Nursing students apply for academic monitoring even as volunteers, because most subareas have only one vacancy with a scholarship.

Although the monitorship is a rich space for the pedagogical growth of the student-monitors, it can be seen that not all opportunities are adequately explored. This becomes evident when some tasks are performed without reflection on the part of the teacher-supervisor. Therefore, it is considered that in the ENF/UERJ, academic monitoring is limited.

This study was facilitated by the enthusiasm of the participants with the theme of the study, especially the teacher-supervisors, who expressed interest in knowing the results of the study.

The limits encountered in the development of this research are related to the time when data collection occurred, since it coincided with the end of the school semester, a period in which students and professors are finishing their activities and building reports, generating setbacks in the scheduling of interviews.

The contribution of this study to nursing is the unveiling of the articulations between the perception of the teacher-supervisor and the student-monitor in the monitoring process at the UERJ College of Nursing.

The results presented reveal the reality of the ENF/UERJ, which makes it impossible to generalize from these results. This limitation highlights the need to expand the study with emphasis on the pedagogical dimension to institutions that have implemented academic monitoring.

Furthermore, it is worth pointing out the need for a theoretical-pedagogical discussion that offers support to academic monitoring by its actors. It is suggested that the professor-supervisors insert this aspect during the orientation of the student-monitors in the planning process of the future academic periods, considering the knowledge already acquired in the first period of the undergraduate course. Another suggestion is that the Faculty should encourage them to participate in discussion forums about the theme.

REFERENCES


