

# CUIDADO É FUNDAMENTAL

Escola de Enfermagem Alfredo Pinto – UNIRIO

RESEARCH

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## EDUCATION OF ETHNIC-RACIAL RELATIONS IN NURSING EDUCATION: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF NURSE-TEACHERS

*Education of ethnic and racial relationships in nursing: an analysis from the perspective of nurse-professors*

*La educación de las relaciones étnico-raciales en la enseñanza de la enfermería: un análisis desde el punto de vista de las enfermeras-docentes*

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** to know the vision of nurse-teachers from the College of Nursing of the Federal University of Pelotas about the education of ethnic-racial relations in the nurse training curriculum. **Method:** : qualitative, exploratory and descriptive study. Twelve nurse-teachers from the institution under study participated. The interviews were conducted in a virtual environment in March and April 2022. The content produced was transcribed in full and treated through content analysis. The research followed all ethical principles. **Results:** education of ethnic-racial relations is not in the course curriculum. The participants feel unprepared for an in-depth debate on the theme. They also report that the obstacles for its insertion in the curriculum are associated with the individual construction of each teacher and of Brazilian society. **Final considerations:** it is observed that there is a need to expand the debate about the insertion of the theme in the course curriculum and its importance for the training of nursing professionals.

**KEYWORDS:** Education, Nursing; Curriculum; Race relations

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## RESUMO

**Objetivo:** conhecer a visão de Enfermeiros-docentes da Faculdade de Enfermagem da Universidade Federal de Pelotas sobre a educação das relações étnico-raciais no currículo de formação do Enfermeiro. **Método:** estudo de natureza qualitativa, exploratória e descritiva. Participaram 12 Enfermeiros-docentes da instituição em estudo. As entrevistas foram realizadas em ambiente virtual de março e abril de 2022. O conteúdo produzido foi transcrito na íntegra e tratado através da análise de conteúdo. A pesquisa seguiu todos os princípios éticos. **Resultados:** a educação das relações étnico-raciais não está no currículo do curso. Os participantes se sentem despreparados para um debate aprofundado sobre a temática. Também relatam que os entraves para a inserção no currículo estão associados à construção individual de cada docente e da sociedade brasileira. **Considerações finais:** se observa a necessidade uma ampliação no debate sobre a inserção da temática no currículo do curso e sua importância para a formação do profissional enfermeiro.

**DESCRITORES:** Educação em enfermagem; Currículo; Relações raciais.

## RESUMEN

**Objetivos:** conocer la visión de los enfermeros-docentes de la Facultad de Enfermería de la Universidad Federal de Pelotas sobre la educación de las relaciones étnico-raciales en el currículo de formación del enfermero. **Método:** estudio de naturaleza qualitativa, exploratoria y descriptiva. Participaron 12 enfermeros-docentes de la institución en el estudio. Las entrevistas se realizaron en un entorno virtual en marzo y abril de 2022. El contenido producido se transcribió en su totalidad y se trató mediante un análisis de contenido. La investigación siguió todos los principios éticos. **Resultados:** la educación de las relaciones étnico-raciales no está en el plan de estudios. Los participantes no se sienten preparados para un debate en profundidad sobre el tema. También informaron que los obstáculos para la inserción del tema en el currículo están asociados a la construcción individual de cada profesor y a la sociedad brasileña. **Consideraciones finales:** es necesario ampliar el debate sobre la inserción del tema en el currículo del curso y su importancia para la formación de los profesionales de enfermería.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación en enfermería; Curriculum; Relaciones raciales

## INTRODUCTION

Ethnic-racial relations are understood as those established between different social groups and their individuals, constructed through ideas and concepts of difference and similarity in terms of racial belonging. The teaching of ethnic-racial relations emerges as a re-education of these relations between black and white people from a pedagogy aimed at combating racism.<sup>1,2</sup>

The recognition of Afro-Brazilian culture and history requires the adoption of pedagogical strategies that value diversity, historical processes, and resistance to overcoming ethnic-racial inequalities at all levels of Brazilian schooling.<sup>1</sup> The National Curriculum Guidelines for the Education of Ethnic-Racial Relations (DCNERER) and the National Policy for the Integral Health of the Black Population (PNSIPN) are in line with the importance of incorporating content related to ethnic-racial relations, Afro-Brazilian and African history and culture in health courses, to contribute to the fight against racism and the understanding of the specificities resulting from the health inequalities that lead to the illness and death of the black population.<sup>3</sup>

Although progress is celebrated in transforming curricula to better articulate the principles and guidelines of the Unified Health System (SUS), racial discrimination remains silenced in health educational practices. Thus, education does not adequately prepare nurses to work with diversity. It privileges mechanistic actions, leaving out the specificities and individualities of each user.<sup>4,5</sup> In order for nurses to understand ethnic-racial relations, they must be supported in undergraduate courses by incorpo-

rating the topic into curricular pedagogical projects (PPCs) and in pedagogical practices.<sup>6</sup>

There is still little scholarly production related to teaching about racial/ethnic relations in higher health education, especially in nursing. Isolated studies are published regarding discussions on the implementation of disciplines that deal with the subject within academic curriculum and in graduate courses, justifying the need for more scientific productions that corroborate with the deepening of the debate.<sup>7-9</sup>

The Nursing College of the Federal University of Pelotas (FEn/UFPel) was created in 1976 by Decree No. 01/76 and was recognized by the Ministry of Education (MEC) by Decree No. 402 of 06/24/80. The course lasts five years, with a workload of 5,000 hours, divided into basic components, specific components, mandatory internship, complementary training, and free training.<sup>10</sup> Given the knowledge of the obligatory inclusion of the education of ethnic-racial relations in the curriculum of all school levels, this article aims to know the opinion of the nursing professors of the FEn/UFPel on the education of ethnic-racial relations in the nursing education curricula.

## METHOD

This is a qualitative, exploratory, and descriptive study. The participants of the study were nurse professors of FEn/UFPel who were selected using the snowball technique. A total of 20 nurse professors were invited, eight of whom refused to participate. Only one guest explicitly refused because he did not feel

comfortable answering the questions on the topic; it was also considered a refusal if the guests did not respond to more than three attempts to contact them. Given the number of invitations and interviews conducted, the saturation point was reached at the 12th interview.

The key informant was a nurse professor who was close to the researcher and who met the inclusion criteria: to be a nurse professor of the effective staff of professors of FEn/UFPel, at least six months ago. The exclusion criteria were teachers who were on sick leave or for improvement during the data collection period or transferred to another institution, and the professors who participated in the examiner, advisor, and co-advisor board.

The study was submitted to "Plataforma Brasil" and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Catholic University of Pelotas and registered under number: 5.181.481, Certificate of Presentation of Ethical Appreciation: 54227621.5.0000.5339. The study followed the ethical precepts postulated in the Code of Ethics of Nursing Professionals, as well as Resolution No. 466/2012, which establishes the guidelines and regulatory standards for research involving human subjects, and Circular Letter No. 1/2021 - National Research Ethics Commission / Executive Secretariat of the National Health Council / Ministry of Health, which guides procedures in research with any stage in a virtual environment.<sup>11-13</sup> The interviews were conducted by the main researcher, a nurse, student of the Graduate Program in Nursing of UFPel (PPGenf/UFPel). Most of the participants were aware of the researcher's intention to conduct the interviews during the Master's course. Data collection took place during March and April 2022 through semi-structured interviews with guiding questions that were considered the objectives of the study.

With the emergence of the coronavirus pandemic, it was necessary to use technologies that allowed the continuity of the research; for this study, institutional videoconferencing software was used, where it was possible to record the interview in audio and video. The first contact with the participants was via WhatsApp, where an invitation to participate in the research was sent with the link to access the Informed Consent Form (ICF) and another link to the virtual room where the interviews took place. The participant's choice of day, date, and time of the interview was respected.

In a virtual environment and with the software's recorder on, the ICF was read by the interviewer and verbal consent was given by the nurse professors, after which the interview was initiated and recorded. The ethical principles of human subjects research of autonomy, beneficence, nonmaleficence, justice, and equity were ensured. The dignity and autonomy of the participant, cultural, social, moral, religious, and ethical values, habits and customs were also respected. The interviews were conducted individually, with only the interviewer and the participant remaining in the room, and each interview lasted an average of 23 minutes.

After the interviews, the content was transcribed in full, literally, and the data were treated through the operational proposal of content analysis, developed in three stages: pre-analysis, exploration of the material or coding, and treatment of the results

obtained/interpretation.<sup>14</sup> The anonymity of the participants was guaranteed by using the acronym ED, which stands for nurse-teacher, followed by the numbers corresponding to the interviews conducted in ascending order (e.g., ED1, ED2, ED3, etc.).

## RESULTS

The study included 12 nurse professors, all identifying as cisgender women, ranging in age from 34 to 67. In terms of race/color, the participants self-identified as one black, one mulatto, and 10 white. All have doctoral degrees and have been teaching nurses at the institution for more than one year and six months. The results are then presented in three categories.

### Education of ethnic and racial relations and the curricular and pedagogical project of the nursing course

Participants indicate that they believe that education about racial/ethnic relations is important in nursing but acknowledge that the topic is not addressed by the faculty.

*[...] It is a very important issue, [...] We do not have [...] in the university environment [...] within the curriculum this exact discussion. (ED4)*

*[...] so I think it's very important [...] I confess that we don't have it in the curriculum. (ED7)*

*[...] We do not have this process of formation within the graduation. [...] I think it is essential to teach ethnic-racial relations. (ED8)*

Nursing professors understand the issue as a transversal theme within the curriculum, but it is not present in the PPC.

*[...] It should be a cross-cutting issue, but I don't identify it that way. I identify that we [...] There's a class about it, somebody's talking about it, but it's not written and described [...] in PPC. (ED3)*

*[...] That should be said, [...] it should be there in an explicit non-implicit way, [...] for me it's not there, [...] we don't discuss it [...] (ED9).*

To demonstrate that the topic is part of their pedagogical processes, some participants say that they discuss the topic with students in a superficial way during their academic experience in the field.

*[...] Within CAPS [Psychosocial Care Center] we [...] make these discussions, but it is focused on vulnerability, when we look at this population, it is a black population, when they arrive [...] we end up discussing it [...]. (ED4)*

*[...] I coordinate a group [of mental health service users] and then these ethnic-racial issues come up in a certain way within the group, then we [...] discuss with the students. (ED5)*

*[...] eventually, it comes up and then when the issue comes up its relevance and importance is discussed. (ED8)*

### Education on ethnic-racial relations and the desperation of nursing professors

In this category, it is noted that the absence of the topic goes beyond the graduation, the participants also comment on the lack of teacher training.

*This is not included in the training.* (ED1)

*In teacher training? Zero, zero, none.* (ED3)

*[...] We don't have that kind of discussion in teacher education [...] I don't think in any [...] of my trainers we had any kind of focused discussion.* (ED10)

The lack of teaching preparation becomes the main justification for the nurse-professor not to address the topic during the pedagogical process.

*So I know the importance, I know the need, but I still can't discuss it more deeply.* (ED2).

*[...] And then I miss it, I don't argue because I don't have that knowledge either.* (ED9)

For some participants, the lack of teaching preparation is minimized when approaching the topic through the individual search for knowledge.

*[...] So I went to read the materials on the health of the black population to be able to bring those materials to the students and make them available [...]* (ED4).

*[...] I observe life, I study, I go to read, and sometimes there is a student who studies, I will study too.* (ED5)

### Education on ethnic-racial relations and obstacles to its inclusion in nursing education

The participants were asked what the obstacles are to including the topic in the curriculum of the course they teach. For the nurse professors who participated in the study, the obstacles are mainly related to the individual and social construction of the country.

*[...] The limitations of us as a white population that thinks curriculum [...] that doesn't pay attention to that.* (ED3)

*I think it's structural racism.* (ED4)

*[...] It's the people who want to say no, that it doesn't exist.* (ED5)

*Your base [...] Many people do not understand that there is a difference and an important ethnic-racial issue.* (ED8)

## DISCUSSION

The legislation serves as a guide for the creation of new dialogues and new attitudes, promoting a transformative education in the pedagogical processes. The DCNERER of 2004 does not guide the creation of a discipline but makes it clear that the subject must be worked on in the curriculum. In 2018, the education

of ethnic-racial relations was included as a transversal theme in the National Curricular Guidelines for Health Courses, the normative does not bring how the transversal themes should be placed in the curricula, leaving the responsibility of how to work on the theme to the institutions.<sup>4,15,16</sup>

Even if the participants considered the inclusion of the topic relevant, the PPC of 2013, in force in the institution, does not mention the education of ethnic-racial relations or the racial topic in the curricular matrix, in the menus, in the programmatic contents or in the bibliographic reference of the curricular components of the course, which leads to the understanding that, until then, the graduated professional does not receive, during the training, the knowledge necessary to act in the fight against racism and health inequalities of the black population. It is necessary to reorganize the curriculum to include ethnic-racial education in the teaching-learning process; in approaching the subject as a transversal theme, it is important to consider the problems of contemporary society, to reverse power relations.<sup>16-18</sup>

If the nurse-professor does not include the topic in the pedagogical spaces of the training, or if he approaches it superficially, only from the socio-economic perspective, they end up creating a reductionist logic that does not promote a historical, social, political, and cultural analysis that includes ethnic-racial diversity. Moreover, this reductionist logic can contribute to the perpetuation of stereotypes and the reproduction of racism, especially scientific racism.<sup>19</sup>

Through the statements of the participants, it was possible to observe that the view of the nurse-professors on the insertion of education on ethnic-racial relations is confused. This confusion can be related to several reasons, among which the lack of knowledge about the subject, mainly due to the lack of debate within the institution. The higher the level of theoretical deepening, the higher the level of awareness about the importance of addressing the issue of race in nursing education.<sup>18</sup>

The PPGEnf/UFPel also fails to present disciplines that carry the theme of race in the programmatic content of future teachers. It is important to build a debate to include the issue in a mandatory discipline within the PPGEnf/UFPel. This inclusion should not be seen as a bureaucratic obligation but as a political and social responsibility. It should be noted that the creation of an elective discipline can leave the subject only to those who are interested, which is not ideal; all graduates of the program need to receive the necessary information to carry out pedagogical activities related to ethnic-racial relations.<sup>18,20,21</sup>

The FEn/UFPel focus of this study, as well as the university, maintains a white hegemony in the faculty. Even with the quota policy that allocates 20% of the vacancies in public calls for applications to black people, the position of the superior magistrum is still represented by the white race, which maintains its position of power within the institution. The white protagonism is responsible for dictating what will be on the agenda and what will be left out of the curriculum. If the teacher is not interested in the subject or does not give it the same importance as other subjects, he or she will tend not to make the subject effective,



relieving himself or herself of the responsibility to make structural changes and maintaining historically acquired privileges.<sup>19,22,23</sup>

The reluctance to discuss the issue of race is also due to the belief that opportunities are available to all, blaming the lack of merit regardless of race/color and presenting social discrimination as the main and only factor to be fought. The myth of racial democracy emerges as an ideological current, reproduced since the 1930s, that denies racism, affirming that the different races that make up Brazilian society (white, black, and indigenous) coexist harmoniously and without conflict, affirming that the difference to be fought is that of social class. In considering that Brazilians have equal opportunities, society feels a "relief" because it does not want to look at the population itself, reproducing and naturalizing racial inequalities and their consequences to this day.<sup>19</sup>

The nurse-professors' difficulty in recognizing racism is an obstacle to the construction of a way of thinking, doing, being, and living together that contributes to the care of the black population. Listening to them, it was possible to recognize the discomfort of the nurse-professors in addressing racial issues; this feeling is revealed when the individual is confronted with the racism he or she carries. Teachers generally present themselves as progressive, in favor of social agendas, engaged in various struggles against oppression, but when they need to discuss racism, they consider it a distant problem, belonging to society, outside its cycle of relations, without being directly involved, excluding colleagues and the institution to which they belong.<sup>9,19,23</sup>

Racism transcends the realm of individual and institutional action; it is part of a social order. By not addressing race relations within the institution, naturalized social situations become commonplace and racism is freely practiced in the form of explicit violence or microaggressions. The only way to combat racism is through the implementation of effective anti-racist practices, the insertion of the racial theme becomes fundamental to enrich the discussions within the academic environment, contributing to the construction of a professional nurse trained for a service free of discrimination.<sup>5,24</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Given the above, it is concluded that despite the legal obligation, the education of ethnic-racial relations is not addressed by the curriculum and pedagogical processes of FEn/UFPEL. Therefore, it is necessary to broaden the debate so that nursing professors and educational administrators understand the importance of including this issue in nursing education.

The improvement of the discussions will contribute to the reformulation of the PPC, which should explicitly present how the theme should be developed by the nurse-professors, and it is important that this reorganization also reaches the PPGEnf/UFPEL, responsible for the training of future nurse-professors who will be trained to teach anti-racist struggle in academic spaces and the health services.

Finally, there are still few scientific studies that deal with the inclusion of education on ethnic-racial relations in the curricu-

lum of health courses, especially nursing, nor production that associates with teaching in nursing and education on ethnic-racial relations, proving the importance of the study and mobilization of actors in favor of the inclusion of the theme in the training and permanent education of teachers.

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