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# Formation in Social Responsibility of Nursing Professionals: a Brazilian Perspective

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Editorial



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The Brazilian Nursing Association (Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem in portuguese ABEn), since its creation 91 years ago, has been dedicated to the defense of education in nursing at all levels. Given that it is a scientific-cultural entity, it is also responsible for the transmission of the profession's *ethos*, which in modern societies has also been done through formal education. Additionally, the Association participates strongly on the formulation of public policies in education and health, with representation in numerous instances of government decision. We postulate that nursing education should envision much more than the technical-scientific preparation of the professional graduating from our teaching institutions: its purpose must be that of educating political social subjects capable of acting responsibly and transforming reality, especially in reducing the vast inequalities of the society in which we live, like, for example, lack of access to the healthcare system by a good part of the population.<sup>(1)</sup>

For the ABEn, formation in nursing needs to have a new meaning for professional action, making it compatible with the transformation of society in ethical, political, and economic terms, that is, beyond the technical training.

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Technical-scientific excellence cannot be discarded; on the contrary, it has to be inserted, and even subsumed, within the ethical-political and moral formation. We have postulated that we must educate for the citizenship, for responsible leadership, for the ethical practice of the profession and, thus, educate to comply with our social responsibility.

We agree with Moraes<sup>(2:1)</sup> in that “education, as a permanent process of transforming action is, undoubtedly, one of the most important instruments (...) to restore values and enable new social insertion opportunities, of promoting the ethics of solidarity, diversity, responsibility, and commitment with the triangle of life represented by the relationships among the individual, society, and nature”. Directly related with social responsibility we find ethics, which seeks to reflect on human behavior, from the point of view of the notions of good and bad, of the just and unjust, encompassing the moral and legal norms. In the field of nursing, ethical behaviors are closely related to the practices and care offered, prevailing among most nursing professionals understanding through common sense, which perceives ethics as a set of norms or guides contained in codes. That is, for these professionals, acting in ethical manner is simply complying with the code referred.

Daily experiences and the context in which interpersonal relations and care occur – nurses, professionals from other action fields, patients and relatives – are rarely understood as conflict-generating sources. Ethics is situated within the field of practical knowledge, of knowledge about what is contingent. Ethics belongs to the domain of moral judgments or value judgments, sensitive to persuasion, subject to the influence of emotions, susceptible to prejudice, and subjected to the complexity of interests.<sup>(3)</sup> Besides ethics, another concept that is related directly with social responsibility is the concept of *citizenship*. Although stemming as a condition of the human being linked to rights and duties toward the society in which we live, in modern times, citizenship is linked to more solidary and responsible ways of living in society.

Faced with the serious economic and social crisis being experienced by society, the concept of citizenship must be taken as a “mediating concept of the minimum requirements of justice and of the sense of community belonging; hence, meaning equality in dignity and compromise with that which is public, today an absolutely fundamental value. Citizenship constitutes the *raison d’être* of civility, fostered by the fact that citizens share an ideal of justice, as well as a set of values, attitudes, behaviors, and commitments, whose common denominator resides

in the fact that, beneath all our cultural, social, and economic differences there is the same air we breathe and a single source that permits life and which also governs the laws of collective living”.<sup>(2:2)</sup> Regarding the citizenship of women, it is fitting to highlight that much still needs to be done, given that men and women must have the best living conditions and enjoy equal rights; and it is known that the crisis mentioned has been affecting and putting in check the survival of our civilization, impacting much more seriously upon women.

Currently, in Brazil and other countries in Latin America and Africa, some phenomena that have deteriorated the lives of women have been accentuated and, consequently, have affected their condition of citizenship. These are some examples of the subaltern reality of women in the field of social relations:<sup>(4)</sup> the feminization of poverty, which brings as consequence of the increasing numbers of women heads of household, constituting the highest number of impoverished families in society; the overload caused by multiple working hours; violence in relationships of intimacy; discrimination in work relations and in social relations generally; lack of power of decision over their own bodies; inequality of power in the field of sexuality, among others.

In term of the social responsibility of nursing, *what does this have to do with the work of women and women’s right to citizenship?* The answer is everything because we understand that nurses’ know-how is directly linked to women’s know-how. If we admit that the contradictions experienced by nursing, largely have to do with the contradictions experienced by women in general; the struggle by nurses must necessarily be allied with the struggle by women for their social rights.<sup>(5)</sup>

Regarding the formation for social responsibility, it becomes urgent to find paths for students (in formation) and professionals (on qualification) to be able to comprehend the vastness and the issues underlying this responsibility and participate decidedly in all stages of the processes to broaden critical consciousness and empowerment. Educational institutions and their professors must propitiate in the students the acquisition of knowledge and experiences, in addition to technical-scientific excellence, for the purpose of educating to practice nursing committed with its social responsibility in full exercise of citizenship.

Lastly, we wish to leave as a motto: *empowered women form empowered professional citizens for ethical, critical, and socially responsible professional practice. Empowered women will be first-class women in any profession.*

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