



Review article

Deconstrucción y reconstrucción del pensamiento enfermero: su implicación en políticas públicas

Deconstruction and reconstruction of nursing thought: its implication in public policies

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Resumen

Descripción del tema: Actualmente es necesario que los profesionales de enfermería participen de manera activa dentro de la política pública, reconociéndolo como un compromiso hacia el ejercicio de la enfermería en México. Fortaleciendo esta participación creará nuevas oportunidades para el desarrollo de la salud en nuestro país desde una perspectiva enfermera.

Relevancia: el presente trabajo surge de cuestionamientos relacionados con la poca participación activa del personal de enfermería dentro del marco sociopolítico, lo cual representa una problemática social para el quehacer enfermero. Asimismo, tiene como objetivo describir la importancia de dicha participación en la creación de políticas públicas, así como sugerir propuestas que favorezcan este cambio de paradigma de la enfermería asistencial.

Conclusiones: La enfermería se ha actualizado en el transcurso de los últimos años, siendo protagonista en distintos ámbitos de su ejercicio. Sin embargo, es necesaria la consolidación de conocimientos en la rama sociopolítica, por lo que la enfermería requiere de un cambio de pensamiento hacia la búsqueda de estrategias que le permitan mantener una participación dentro de esta área, contribuyendo de este modo al desarrollo de la salud desde un enfoque humanizado y sustentable.

Palabras clave: Enfermería, estudiantes, política.

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Abstract

Description of the topic: Nursing today must assume the commitment to exercise its active participation in the design and analysis of public policies, based on solid theoretical foundations. It is recognized that in Mexico this participation plays a minority role, so strengthening it and creating emerging opportunities will be beneficial for the development of health in Mexico, from a nursing perspective, a nursing policy.

Relevance: This paper arises from questions related to the lack of active participation of nursing personnel within the sociopolitical framework, which represents a social problem for nursing work. It also seeks to describe the importance of such participation in the creation of public policies, as well as to suggest proposals that favor this change of paradigm of nursing care.

Conclusions: Nursing has begun a path of empowerment, taking a leading role in different areas. The formation of a consolidated nursing corps with socio-political knowledge, which reconstructs its thinking, directing it to respond and expand its social participation, thus contributing to the development of health from a humanized and sustainable approach, is recognized as a priority.

Keywords: nursing, students, politics.

Introduction

Within society, nursing has played a role associated with health care, both for individuals and their communities. This role had as its starting point the political activism exercised by Florence Nightingale in the 19th century; during this period, care had a solid base in human values, as well as a historically determined political dimension, which granted it an essential participation in the collective work of health.¹ In this sense, nursing is conceptualized in favor of care, quality, and access to health care, and in defense of individuals from a professional sense, which distinguishes it from other sciences.

Nursing is a social practice that can be a force capable of mobilizing broader social change. Undoubtedly, to the extent that this practice

sets its professional course by taking advantage of such windows of opportunity, it will develop a constructive influence on health equity worldwide.²

On the other hand, the health development of a population is determined by the relationships between the economy, politics, and the social context. These determinant issues have been widely analyzed from historical starting points, which include, according to María de la Guardia Gutiérrez, those “*environmental, biological, behavioral, social, economic, labor, cultural factors and, of course, health services as an organized and specialized response of society to prevent disease and restore health*”.³

Based on this, it is identified that these social determinants imply situations in which the population's health is impaired, which derives

from factors that limit or potentiate access to health services, as well as the maintenance of an optimal state of health. It should be noted that these determinants include economic and political issues that direct actions towards specific objectives.

The development of new knowledge, skills, and attitudes focused on public policy is essential for nursing to be inserted into governmental decision-making and policy formulation.^{4,5} The history of nursing, as well as its social recognition as a fundamental part of the health body, provides this discipline with the necessary elements to understand health dynamics from a social approach. Likewise, the strengthening of knowledge in this area of action will allow it to respond more efficiently to the health needs of the population.

In a changing and globalized society, nursing today must assume the commitment to exercise its active participation in the design and analysis of public policies, based on solid theoretical foundations. It is recognized that in Mexico this participation plays a minority role, so strengthening it and creating emerging opportunities will be beneficial for the development of health in Mexico, from a nursing perspective, a nursing policy.

This paper arises from questions related to the social problems implied in the scarce active participation of nursing personnel within the socio-political framework of nursing work. It also seeks to describe the importance of nursing participation in the creation of public policies, as well as to suggest proposals that favor this change of paradigm of nursing care.

Development

In 2010, in the Adelaide Declaration, the World Health Organization (WHO) established

health in all policies, highlighting the importance of the participation of the health area in the design of public policies as a social discussion. It also defined it as a tool that enables economic, environmental, and social development in the pursuit of the well-being of individuals in terms of health.⁶

Thus, the need for the contribution of health personnel in this political process is highlighted, starting from their training and professional experience, as a reminder of the knowledge and skills that they possess and that act as triggers for change in health issues.

On the other hand, the WHO has regularly published since 2002 the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery,⁶ in which it emphasizes, following the historical development of nursing, the need for the involvement of these professionals in the structuring of new public health policies, seeking to achieve the objectives proposed by taking into account the efficiency that nursing personnel can provide in the construction of these strategies.

Once the need for an active participation of nursing personnel in the socio-political sphere with a focus on health is roughly recognized, questions arise: *how can the participation of this discipline in politics achieve changes in health care?*, *what is the change that nursing needs to reconstruct itself from another perspective?*

Concerning the second question, it is essential to emphasize that the nursing professional is inclined towards a specific area of action, dedicating himself to service and care in the assistance area, which allows his labor insertion in hospital units. However, this performance of the profession limits its field of action to the resolution of concerns and problems within the hospital area, leaving aside other spaces that require the

participation of the nursing professional as a generator of change.

In this way, the social conceptualization of nursing is maintained within a specific health area; static, as an assistant to the doctor, not independent and without social recognition, and the real meaning that nursing entails is left aside, ignoring the skills and knowledge that are developed within other fields, such as epidemiology, mental and occupational health care, as well as politics.⁷

Currently, the main assumption in the nurse's thinking is that the greatest aspiration in this discipline is to work in specialized hospital units, due to the consequences that this entails and that have already been mentioned. This idea is encouraged in the university education of the nursing professional.

The lack of knowledge of the different areas in which nursing can generate changes, and implement and design strategies directed towards the achievement of health objectives, limits professional performance and therefore the development of science.

On the other hand, and concerning the first question, the training and experience of the nursing area make it a unique discipline that can recognize health problems, propose solutions for the different obstacles that arise in its work, and intercede on behalf of patients and their families.²

Laura Morán⁸ takes up the description by Silvina Malvárez⁹ and mentions that the development of nursing has been directed towards the good care of the world, and has required a different conceptualization based on the current context, so she defines it as: *"The science, art, philosophy, ethics and politics of human care, which is organized and expressed socially with a singular identity, in a complex field of knowledge,*

intervention and social responsibility that institute its professional identity with the community and other health professions". Likewise, the author categorizes it as complex when referring to the knowledge involved, which is not only physiological or anatomical, but also includes empirical knowledge and knowledge from other areas, i.e., transdisciplinary knowledge. Morán emphasizes the social responsibility associated with the discipline, starting from the visibility and social recognition it has been granted, and points out the political issue in which it is immersed, consciously or not. She also mentions, again quoting Malvárez's words, that:

The challenge of caring for the world and caring for it well implies political action, advocacy, participation, cooperation and renewed management styles, educational models oriented to the health priorities of nations in themselves and in global interconnection, new objects of research, an enormous associative action and the definitive and inexcusable adoption of teamwork, as well as the notion of intersectoriality.^{8,9}

Thus, it becomes imperative to point out that care entails a political issue, and that it also arises from the education that is imparted and directed towards health care.

Therefore, the expansion of health programs, based on a nursing approach, would achieve progress in the effectiveness and attainment of the objectives set. In political matters, understanding the legal aspects, norms, and legislative changes necessary to achieve an impact requires three skills: the advancement of broad knowledge directed towards political subsystems, the strengthening of democratic transdisciplinary networks, and the contribution within the political sphere over a long time.¹⁰

It is recognized that nursing can formulate

policies or participate in their design, based on all the scientific evidence obtained through research in its various designs or the empirical experience acquired through practice. This discipline is capable of understanding those human aspects that can only be identified by maintaining direct contact with patients, families, and communities, as well as recognizing the impact that current policies have on health systems.

However, what is important for these changes to be achieved is that nurses recognize that their participation in the social context would provide politics with the opportunity to make a change considering their perspective and that this would achieve a different potential in practice and in the management of the resources needed to bring health to an optimal level.¹¹

Based on this, other questions arise: *how can nursing be aware of the importance of its participation in political matters?*, and *how can nursing thought be deconstructed based on the above-mentioned evidence?*

For nursing to be recognized as a fundamental actor in political terms, it needs to broaden its knowledge of the legal framework that governs practices in its area, which establishes health regulations, the budget granted to it, and the deficiencies and benefits in the distribution of resources. For this reason, the strategies described by the International Council of Nursing are of utmost importance, since they would allow nursing to approach this field of action, which is necessary for advancing science.¹²

The deconstruction of nursing thought, which aims at greater participation within the care area for the resolution of problems within this field, can be addressed in the training of the nursing professional. This strategy of approaching political knowledge can be implemented during

undergraduate and strengthened in graduate school.

Conclusions

The participation of nursing in formulating public policies would favor the approach to various aspects, such as the care of emerging diseases, and geriatric patients, the approach to health inequities, and the management of available resources for health care.

The development of nursing science requires knowledge in line with the current context and a recognition of the use and distribution of financial resources within the health area. Accessibility to accurate sources of information is increasingly within the reach of society, which provides the necessary clarity to address individual, family, community, and collective problems. Ignorance of these elements or bias in their knowledge limits scientific progress. On the other hand, how this knowledge is acquired is diverse for the entire population.

Regarding the knowledge that nursing personnel need about these areas, it is suggested that the proposals of the International Council of Nurses be taken up again starting with undergraduate education, since its influence on nursing students is considered essential as an initial step that allows the development of a nursing policy based on theoretical knowledge put into practice.

Among the strategies proposed to bring nursing closer to political issues, the following are described: to promote in undergraduate students the writing and expression of opinions on politics to bring them closer to current issues in this area, which will allow them early recognition of the context in which health is developed in their country and the world; to

enhance research in which nursing participates in political or social matters; distinguish national or international nurses who play a leading role or participate in political action, as well as recognize the contributions of important nurses such as Virginia Henderson or Marjory Gordon, and finally, strengthen leadership in nursing to occupy managerial, representative and change-generating positions.

Nursing has begun a path of empowerment, taking a leading role in different areas. The formation of a consolidated nursing corps with socio-political knowledge, which reconstructs its thinking, directing it to respond and expand its social participation, thus contributing to the development of health from a humanized and sustainable approach, is recognized as a priority.

Finally, to transform nursing thought, it is necessary not to encourage a romanticization of the profession, to rethink that its field of action is not only within hospital institutions, and to give opportunities to other areas, in which it is possible to develop skills and knowledge to lead science towards lasting change.

Conflict of Interest Statement

It is declared that there is no conflict of interest.

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