



Leadership teaching strategies in undergraduate nursing courses

Estratégias para ensinar liderança na graduação de Enfermagem

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Objective: to identify the scientific evidence on strategies to teach leadership in undergraduate nursing courses. **Methods:** an integrative review of the literature carried out in the Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature, Nursing Databases, Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature, Public Medline and Web of Science. **Results:** fourteen articles from the 356 retrieved in the survey were included in the review. The main teaching strategies identified were: nursing internship, simulation of real clinical events and use of audiovisual resources that positively impact leadership learning. **Conclusion:** creative ways and innovative approaches to learning improve leadership behaviors, favor the training of leaders among nursing undergraduates, and refute conventional and passive pedagogy.

Descriptors: Leadership; Teaching; Students, Nursing.

Objetivo: identificar as evidências científicas acerca das estratégias para ensinar liderança na graduação de Enfermagem. **Métodos:** revisão integrativa da literatura, nas bases de dados Literatura Latino-americana e do Caribe em Ciências da Saúde, Bases de dados de Enfermagem, *Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature*, *Public Medline* e *Web of Science*. **Resultados:** quatorze artigos incluídos de 356 recuperados. As principais estratégias de ensino identificadas foram: estágio em enfermagem, simulação de eventos clínicos reais e uso de recursos audiovisuais que impactam positivamente no aprendizado da liderança. **Conclusão:** formas criativas e inovadoras de aprendizagem melhoram comportamentos de liderança, favorecem a formação de líderes entre graduandos de enfermagem e refutam a pedagogia convencional e passiva.

Descritores: Liderança; Ensino; Estudantes de Enfermagem.

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Introduction

Challenges to leadership are increasingly present in daily lives of nurses, making this theme a growing target among researchers in Brazil and in the world. Before the work team, the professional has to face situations for which he needs to be prepared, both in basic and hospital care. Nurses take on the role of leaders as soon as they enter the job market and this usually happens immediately after graduation. Leadership, today, concerns the process of influence of an individual on the other members of the group. But the ability to have ascendancy over those led, considered by many as something “innate”, can undoubtedly be conquered. If possible, it is desirable that this trait be learnt still during undergraduate training⁽¹⁻²⁾.

Aiming at the well-being of the community, nurses should be able to exercise leadership, which involves commitment, empathy and ability to make decisions, carrying out an effective and efficient management, among other requirements⁽¹⁾. A sustainable health system depends on the nursing leaders to gain and maintain the confidence of users⁽²⁾.

Nursing leadership has been addressed by several authors. The main characteristics of nurse leaders and their contributions to the nursing practice have been discussed, as well as the relationship between the work environment and the nurses' leadership⁽²⁾. The great challenge is to make nurses enter the job market with this ability already fully developed. To this end, the nursing practice and the training of future nurses need to be reviewed. The necessary basis for this to happen is rooted in the teaching-learning process, during training⁽³⁾.

Upon graduating, nurses must have not only knowledge, but also the ability to work as a team, to relate to colleagues and to solve problems. Recent national research on leadership teaching in nursing undergraduate training shows that this competence is only superficially addressed in the curricular matrices of the courses and suggests changes in teaching methodologies and the creation of specific subjects

to train students to become more qualified professionals⁽⁴⁾.

Educators need to have access to successful methods to prepare nurses who will be leaders and researchers, so that this knowledge can be applied in the training of professionals and support the future research on the theme. In view of the above, the objective here was to identify the scientific evidence about the strategies to teach leadership in undergraduate nursing courses.

Methods

This is an integrative review carried out through the following stages⁽⁵⁾: choice of theme and elaboration of the research question, which was: what are the strategies used to teach leadership in nursing undergraduate courses?, using the PICO strategy (P=teaching strategies; I=leadership teaching; and Co=undergraduate nursing courses), establishment of inclusion/exclusion criteria for articles, categorization of studies, evaluation, interpretation of results and presentation of conclusions. We searched original articles published between 2011 and 2016, in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

The bibliographic survey took place between May and December 2016, in the city of São Paulo, Brazil, in the databases: Latin American and Caribbean Health Sciences Literature (LILACS), Nursing Databases (BDENF), Cumulative Index to Nursing & Allied Health Literature (CINAHL), Public Medline (PUBMED), and Web of Science (WOS). The search terms, selected in the Descriptors in Health Sciences and in the Medical Subject Heading Terms, were “Teaching”, “faculty, nursing”, “education, nursing, graduate”, “nursing students” and “leadership”. In order to guarantee a comprehensive research, the following search strategies were used in all the researched databases: [“teaching” OR “faculty, nursing” OR “education, nursing, graduate”] AND “nursing students” AND “leadership”.

The search resulted in 356 articles, of which 216 publications were found in the Web of Science,

74 in United States National Library of Medicine/National Institutes of Health, 32 in LILACS, 12 in BDNF and 22 in CINAHL. The criteria for inclusion of studies were, at the first moment, the analysis titles and descriptors, discarding repeated articles. Three hundred and three articles were excluded. Then, the abstracts of 53 articles were read, which involved the participation of various researchers, and this resulted in the exclusion of 36 studies. Among the 17 articles chosen to be read in full length, three were discarded for not addressing the research question, or for not being related only to undergraduate training, or not involving only nursing students. In the end, 14 studies were included in the review.

The variables analyzed for data extraction of the articles included in the sample were: title and year of publication, teaching strategies used and main results found. The selected studies were grouped into categories, according to the teaching strategy used.

Results

Among the 14 articles included, 11 had been published in the United States, two in Brazil and one in Australia. The studies were published from 2011 to 2016, 12 in English and two in Portuguese. Below, a summary of the main information found in the publications is presented in Figures 1 and 2.

Categories	Titles	Teaching strategies	Main results
Use of audiovisual resources	Perspectives From the Field: Bringing Nurse Leaders Into the Classroom ⁽⁶⁾	Semi-structured interviews, recorded on video, to "take" leadership into the classroom.	The perception on the part of students that leadership is an inherent competence to the profession after showing the interviews.
	Using film, television, and other media to teach management and leadership concepts ⁽⁷⁾	Film sessions and television programs chosen by teachers and students on the performance of leaders and management principles in all areas.	Students report that films clarify the theoretical content and represent a pleasant opportunity to think about management and leadership concepts.
	Thinking Like a Nurse: Using Video Simulation to Rehearse for Professional Practice ⁽⁸⁾	Video scenarios drawn from real clinical events that require leadership, communication, and critical thinking to solve ethical issues and dilemmas.	Post-learning assessment with video simulation reveals that students gain new skills and begin to "think like a nurse".
Participation in simulations	Development of team skills in novice nurses through an athletic coaching model ⁽⁹⁾	Simulation exercises encourage leadership, assuming that Nursing is a "team sport" and errors occur when members do not collaborate.	The activities allowed the development of skills related to teamwork to be used in the professional practice of future nurses.
	Transformational Leadership: Instituting a Nursing Simulation Program ⁽¹⁰⁾	Use of scenarios to simulate clinical events that allow each student to grow and gain experience both as a leader and as a team member.	Instructors reported a positive <i>feedback</i> about the use of simulation, requests for more experiences of this type and the intention to increase the use of this strategy in undergraduate training.
	Teaching Nursing Leadership: Comparison of Simulation versus Traditional Inpatient Clinical ⁽¹¹⁾	The students experience simulations and actual clinical experiences and have to face situations that require quick and team actions.	Learning takes place in both environments, but communication develops best in real situations.
Coaching	The Peer Assist Model: Leadership for clinical teaching ⁽¹²⁾	The model trains students in time management, critical thinking, and collaborative skills in a teamwork mentality.	<i>Coaching</i> helps students develop clinical judgment, improve patient outcomes, and build interpersonal relationships in the unit.

Figure 1 – Primary studies included in the integrative review

Categories	Titles	Teaching strategies	Main results
Practical ex- periences	Clinical Leadership Development in Accelerated Baccalaureate Nursing Students: An Education Innovation ⁽¹³⁾	The initiative integrates classroom and clinical rotation through leadership strategies and evidence-based practice.	Students and teachers saw the experience as successful, resulting in improved self-efficacy in the leadership, communication and dissemination of knowledge.
	Findings from a Study of Aspiring Nursing Student Leaders ⁽¹⁴⁾	Volunteer students participate in the program implemented in the final 18 months of the undergraduate course for leadership development based on student engagement in learning.	Leadership practices increased as evaluated by pre and post-tests, being stronger among students at the end of the program.
	The Embodiment of Authentic Leadership ⁽¹⁵⁾	Course based on the pillars of the Macy Leadership Program, in which students learn to recognize leadership as a process shaped by ethical values and critical life events.	The feedback from students showed that critical pedagogy and action-oriented learning strategies have a beneficial effect on the acquisition of leadership skills.
	Active learning and leadership in an undergraduate curriculum: How effective is it for student learning and transition to practice? ⁽¹⁶⁾	Learning used multiple intelligences in an attempt to enable students to work with the concept of themselves as leaders in the workplace and to promote this experience.	Creative forms of learning positively impact the development of leadership and prepare the student for the future challenges of the profession.
	Development of leadership behaviors in undergraduate nursing students: a service-learning approach ⁽¹⁷⁾	Groups of students plan, implement and evaluate a community health education fair, including educational materials to the target audience.	Assessment before and after the experiment showed that students perceived the increase of leadership skills.
	Nursing teachers' view on the training of nurse leaders ⁽¹⁸⁾	Teachers point out facilitators and barriers to the teaching-learning process of leadership and strategies to facilitate the training of future professionals.	The insertion of the academic in the practical field and the transversal teaching of leadership are strategies that help in the preparation of nurse leaders.
	Leadership learning: contributions of nursing internship to student training ⁽¹⁹⁾	Senior students report difficulties encountered in learning leadership, aspects they considered essential to be a nurse leader, and the role of the internship in skills acquisition.	Students believe that leadership can not be exercised by any person, that they are not prepared to lead, that teachers do not teach leadership and that they themselves do not value the subject.

Figure 2 – Primary studies included in the integrative review

The thorough analysis of the articles pointed out some of the strategies used to teach leadership in Nursing courses. Three studies⁽⁶⁻⁸⁾ highlighted the use of audiovisual resources. Simulations were present in three articles⁽⁹⁻¹¹⁾, which introduced students to the role of leaders and team members. Internship, also treated as a boarding school, is another strategy that emerged alone or associated, and had a positive impact on leadership in two publications⁽¹²⁻¹³⁾.

Two other studies⁽¹⁴⁻¹⁵⁾ pointed leadership courses within the undergraduate matrix as a good methodology for training leaders. An article investigated the use of Active Methodology to develop the skills needed to be a future leader⁽¹⁶⁾ and another study evaluated the perception of improved leadership skills in nursing students in a service-learning experience⁽¹⁸⁾. And, finally, the sample had two studies⁽¹⁸⁻¹⁹⁾ that evaluated the teaching and learning of leadership from the perspective of teachers and students.

Discussion

The limitation of the study was the possibility of overlooking other articles that responded to the research question due to the inclusion criteria established by the researchers. This review presented strategies for a more effective path in teaching leadership in undergraduate education, but it is far from exhausting the possibilities that exist within the classroom and in the traineeships for effective achievement of that competence during the years of nurse training. The search in other databases would expand the universe of strategies found and tested.

Studies included in this review demonstrated that audiovisual resources are powerful tools in the teaching-learning process. The analysis of the articles addressing the theme showed that the involvement of students is notorious, thus stressing the importance of teaching leadership in undergraduate training⁽¹⁾. Video resources were used, for example, to bring successful and recognized leaderships to the nursing area of the American Midwest into the classroom at the University of Wisconsin in the United States⁽⁶⁾. Students participated in the formulation of questions to be asked to leaders, recording of interviews, and editing of videos. The project showed that it is possible to promote enriching experiences at low cost and, more importantly, students reported at the end that they understood leadership as inherent to the nursing profession.

Films and television programs about the performance of leaders and management principles, not necessarily in the clinical environment, indicated by teachers or chosen along with nursing students, become a pleasant opportunity to reflect on management and leadership concepts⁽⁷⁾. Videos can be used still associated with simulations, with good results for the acquisition of competences. Students are involved in scenarios drawn from real clinical events that require leadership, communication and critical thinking to solve ethical problems and dilemmas⁽⁸⁾. The exercise

promotes the connection of concepts and skills that facilitate learning and the students discover ways to work as a team and begin to think like nurses. These pedagogical tools helped to clarify theoretical contents and were considered stimulating by the students, besides stress the need to use more active and innovative strategies for the teaching of leadership in undergraduate nursing courses⁽⁴⁾.

Currently, audiovisual resources have provided greater interactivity in learning scenarios and favored the teaching process⁽²⁰⁾. This strategy is a tool that teachers can use to approximate theoretical contents to practical aspects necessary for the development of leadership.

Another way of investing in the training of nurse leaders in undergraduate courses is to motivate students to experience, in the form of simulation, reliable clinical events. Classroom simulation exercises offer nursing students the opportunity to develop skills related to teamwork and learn from mistakes without fear of harming patients. In the model Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety, the teachers/instructors facilitate group activities that encourage leadership, communication, delegation and adaptability⁽⁹⁾. Simulations can also highlight the principles of transformational leadership and enable students to grow and develop both as leaders and team members⁽¹⁰⁾. The exercises improve the performance of students and contribute to the acquisition of confidence and experience to be used in the professional practice of future nurses. Compared to leadership learning in traditional clinical settings, simulations are more effective to promote a better retention of knowledge, but communication is best developed in real situations⁽¹¹⁾. Thus, both are complementary to acquire competences and should be equally applied during the training of nurses⁽²¹⁾.

Learning and practicing leadership in health services has also proved to be an effective teaching strategy that serves to reduce the gap between nursing theory and practice. Cooperation in management

and care encourages leaders and improves time management in clinical practice. Internships allow students to have more prolonged contact with patients, families and professionals, as an ideal setting for them to show knowledge, skills and attitudes and where nurses take on the role of leaders in a dynamic and interactive way⁽²⁾.

In this sense, internships associated with a model, such as the Peer Assist Model, based on coaching among peers, allows for a great exchange of information where nurses teaching students, students bringing new knowledge to nurses, and students learn with their peers within a positive mentality of teamwork and mutual respect⁽¹²⁾. Another model, the Clinical Leadership Education Initiative, in which each undergraduate develops an evidence-based plan in the classroom and then applies it "in the real world" of clinical care, has also proved adequate to promote the development of competences⁽¹³⁾. Such strategies favor the development of leaderships that can revitalize workplaces by reaching common goals for individuals and organizations, and by continually improving the performance of leaders and those who are led⁽²²⁾.

Another way to foster student engagement in the own learning is the courses or programs on leadership development applied during nursing undergraduate training. The Kouzes and Posner Leadership Practices Inventory showed that leadership practices increased and are perceived to be stronger after the program in the final 18 months of university training⁽¹⁴⁾.

In a course based on the pillars and principles of the Macy Leadership Program, future nurses came to understand leadership as a process shaped by ethical, cultural, and critical life events⁽¹⁵⁾. Critical pedagogy and action-oriented strategies proved to be beneficial for skills acquisition. In fact, pedagogical practices that flee from discursive classes tend to have better results than conventional and passive pedagogy when it comes to teaching leadership. Active Learning, for example, uses multiple intelligences to make nursing

students work with the concept of themselves as leaders⁽¹⁶⁾. The experience helps them to develop leadership and show that this trait can be learned. The same is true for integrating learning services with undergraduate activities. By planning, implementing and evaluating a community health fair, students were able to learn and develop leadership skills in a comprehensive, creative and collaborative way⁽¹⁷⁾.

However, leadership teaching and learning has a barrier to be tackled in undergraduate contexts: the understanding that students have of what is Nursing. Students value care in itself and technical skills, but do not understand that good care is directly related to leadership and managerial skills. Management-related subjects in the curricular matrix of the undergraduate course are considered monotonous, uninteresting and useless in the view of many students. However, interest is aroused when interactive and group activities, or games, are proposed in the classroom, showing the importance of using innovative strategies to develop skills.

Difficulties are recognized by teachers and students. Teachers believe that it is their responsibility to facilitate the development of leadership in students⁽¹⁸⁾. Among the strategies identified as facilitators of training of nurse leaders are the insertion of the academic in the practical field, the interaction of the teacher with the team, and the transversal teaching of leadership. Students reinforce the idea that teachers do not teach how to be a leader, but also recognize that they themselves do not value leadership learning⁽¹⁹⁾. The path to change this behavior on both parties must be accessible.

There is a lot yet to be investigated, not only in databases, but in the field, along with undergraduates. Accompanying them closely over four or five years of nursing courses may show how leadership can be learned at the undergraduate level, as these students will soon, after receiving the diploma, be fully engaged in hospitals and health services.

Therefore, the contribution of this study raises

a reflection about the practice of leadership teaching in nursing undergraduate courses. It also allows teachers to apply the strategies identified in different scenarios, to compare them and to propose new possibilities to produce evidence on the theme.

Conclusion

It was identified that creative and innovative forms of learning improve leadership behaviors, favor the training of leaders among nursing undergraduate students, and refute conventional and passive pedagogy.

Collaborations

Lins ML, Balsanelli AP and Neves VR contributed to the design and conception, analysis and interpretation of the data, article writing, critical review of the intellectual content and final approval of the version to be published.

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