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Specialization courses and public health: intersectorality

Cursos de especialização e a saúde coletiva: intersectorialidade

Cursos de especialización y salud pública: intersectorialidad

ABSTRACT

The provision of intersectoral health education actions encompasses the dimension of comprehensiveness within the Unified Health System, which also includes integral care through interdisciplinarity. The objective of this experience report is to characterize the educational offerings of the School of Public Health of the State of Minas Gerais regarding Specialization Courses in Health Law and Public Health-Health in the Prison System. Methods: Sources included institutional documents and technical-scientific Productions. Analysis was conducted through thematic units such as the history of demand for educational action, forms of institutionalizing partnerships, challenges, and strategies. Results highlight demands originating from health advocacy movements and the implementation of public policies; strategies for formalizing partnerships and interdisciplinary construction driven by the diversity of those involved (life stories and professional backgrounds) via dialogical approaches and interactions. It was concluded that the provision of these courses is built upon the commitment of all parties involved.

Keywords: *Health Education; Intersectoral Collaboration; Health Law.*

RESUMO

A oferta de ações intersectoriais de educação em saúde abrange a dimensão da integralidade do Sistema Único de Saúde que também inclui o cuidado integral, via interdisciplinaridade. O objetivo do relato de experiência é caracterizar a oferta da Escola de Saúde Pública do Estado de Minas Gerais quanto aos Cursos de Especialização em Direito Sanitário e em Saúde Pública-Saúde no Sistema Prisional. Métodos: Fontes de documentos institucionais e produções técnico-científicas. Análise por unidades temáticas como História da demanda da

ação educativa, Formas de institucionalização de parcerias, Desafios e estratégias. Resultados apontam para demandas oriundas de movimentos de defesa da saúde e em prol da implementação de políticas públicas; estratégia de formalização de parcerias e construção interdisciplinar pela diversidade dos envolvidos (histórias de vida e formações) via abordagens e interações dialógicas. Concluiu-se que a oferta de tais Cursos é construída pelo compromisso dos envolvidos.

Palavras-chave: *Educação em Saúde; Intersectorialidade; Direito Sanitário.*

RESUMEN

La oferta de acciones intersectoriales de educación en salud abarca la dimensión de la integralidad del Sistema Único de Salud, el cuidado integral a través de la interdisciplinariedad. El objetivo del relato es caracterizar la oferta de la Escuela de Salud Pública del Estado de Minas Gerais en cuanto a los Cursos de Especialización en Derecho Sanitario y en Salud Pública en el Sistema Penitenciario. Métodos: Fuentes de documentos institucionales y producciones técnico-científicas. Análisis por unidades temáticas como Historia de la demanda de la acción educativa, Formas de institucionalización de alianzas, Desafíos y estrategias. Resultados indican demandas provenientes de movimientos de defensa de la salud y en favor de la implementación de políticas públicas; estrategia de formalización de alianzas y construcción interdisciplinar por la diversidad de los involucrados a través de enfoques e interacciones dialógicas. Se concluyó que la oferta de tales cursos se construye mediante el compromiso de los involucrados.

Descriptores: *Educación en Salud; Intersectorialidad; Derecho Sanitario.*

INTRODUCTION

Intersectorality in public health is achieved through ideologies, policies, guidelines, and/or interinstitutional work processes that aim to realize the right to health, whether in terms of comprehensive health care (promotion, protection, and care) or quality of life for a population. Such intersectorality is thus achieved through the daily experience of interdisciplinarity, in which different areas of knowledge interact and are reworked into new perspectives, knowledge, and practices that lead to more decisive responses to the needs of social groups in their territories of life (residence, work, leisure, and/or circulation)¹.

Cross-sector and interdisciplinary challenges in public health overlap because they operate in contexts shaped by fragmented interests, priorities, knowledge, and social practices, often against a backdrop of ideological, political, technical, and administrative disputes, usually in situations where financial resources are scarce.

The situation described is fertile ground for the training of social actors based on the fundamentals of Public Health, open to interacting with social reality, without prior theoretical-practical models, but offering subsidies from various fields of knowledge for the training of skilled agents capable of analyzing aspects of reality based on their action-oriented problematization; sometimes to maintain what is working, sometimes to make changes in favor of health responses, based on action.

These are the theoretical assumptions for the discussion surrounding two educational offerings by the Minas Gerais State School of Public Health (ESP/MG), which stem from different motivations but are similar in terms of the strategies and challenges inherent to their institutionalization, operationalization, and continuity. These are the Specialization Course in Health Law, involving institutional partnerships between ESP-MG and the State Health Secretariat (SES/MG), the State Attorney General's Office (AGE), the Public Defender's Office (DP/MG), the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP/MG), and the Court of Justice (TJ/MG), as well as the Specialization Course in Public Health with an emphasis on the Prison System, which is a partnership with the State Secretariat of Justice and Public Security (SEJUSP/MG)^{4,5}.

The report on this experience is justified by the possibility of demonstrating the offer of two intersectoral Specialization Courses, through the following objectives: to contextualize the origin of the demand for educational action; to characterize the institutionalization of intersectoral partnerships and the process of knowledge development based on curricular and pedagogical aspects of the courses; and to identify challenges and strategies inherent to the processes, based on the premise of seeking interdisciplinarity, supported by the field of knowledge and practices of Public Health.

METHOD

The report on the experience of offering Specialization Courses focused on Health Law and Public Health with an emphasis on the Prison System by ESP-

MG was based on the interpretation of the staff involved, with consistent support from institutional documents (Technical Cooperation Agreements, Pedagogical Projects, Course Evaluation Reports, and Student Selection Notices) and technical-scientific publications (Books, Manuals, and Presentations at scientific events).

The analysis of interpretations supported by documentary sources was based on thematic units in order to compile a historical and temporal account, including: the emerging demand for educational action at the School; the establishment of partnerships; the creation of partners networks to develop the curriculum and respective interdisciplinary courses, based on the premise of the diversity of the target audience's (students) educational background and professional experience; and, finally, the challenges and strategies involved in the process.

The dialogue of preliminary findings, aligned with the relevant theoretical and practical framework, contributed to the clear expression of the experience report and respective learnings.

RESULTS

The Institutionalization of Intersectoral Partnerships: Origins, Means, and Forms

The Specialization Course in Health Law offered by ESP-MG stems from common ideas and values in favor of the effectiveness of the Health Law in Brazil and the defense of the Unified Health System (SUS). This statement can be exemplified by historical facts dating back to the early 1990s, such as the development of specific training activities in the field of Health Law through postgraduate courses at ESP-MG, seminars developed by SES/MG addressing the judicialization of health, field activities involving the Consumer Protection Program (PROCON) of the MP/MG and Health Surveillance services, among other projects that aimed to articulate and increase actions in favor of the right to health within the municipalities the regions in MG.

These specific training initiatives in the field of Health Law gained momentum and took shape in the late 1990s with ESP-MG's first offering of a Specialization Course in Health Law, through a partnership with the Center for Research in Health Law at the University of São Paulo (CEDEPISA/USP), which cleared the way for dialogue with law schools in Minas Gerais.

In this regard, the dialogue between ESP-MG staff and academics was a key factor in consolidating the process, given that since the first postgraduate course was offered (1998-2000), there has been dialogue between ESP-MG staff and academic professors who are scholars in the field of Health Law, notably professors Sueli Gandolfi Dallari and Fernando Aith from the University of São Paulo (USP), the latter still teaching in the current Specialization Course in Health Law offered by ESP-MG, now in its 11th class (2024-2026).

The Specialization Course in Public Health with an emphasis on the Prison System, in turn, responds to the implementation of established policies, based on enacted laws, embodying the current National Policy for Comprehensive Health Care for the Imprisoned Population in the Prison System (PNAISP), whose implementation in the territories is supported by the training of managers and technicians working in the areas of management, security, and health or related areas.

The establishment of inter-institutional partnerships within the scope of ESP-MG was identified in both Specialization Courses developed, focused on training in Health Law and Public Health with an emphasis on the Prison System. This situation was maintained in the latest Technical Cooperation Agreements (ACT), published through a public notice (2024), signed by all the authorities of the institutions involved. 4.5 What can be observed in a comparative manner between the Agreements over time is the evolution in terms of the responsibilities assigned to the partners with regard to operationalization, monitoring of the goals to be achieved, and increasing diversity of activities in the action plans, linking Research and Free Distance Learning Courses (EAD) to the respective themes.

In the case of the Specialization Course in Health Law, the ACT agreement sought to renew the institutional partnerships already established and formalized in other terms, which governed previous classes. The 2024 instrument, based on the experience gained, sought to deepen and broaden the scope of the actions developed. In this sense, in addition to offering the Specialization Course, the new ACT included a commitment to offer Distance Learning Courses (EAD) in a three-module training program focused on topics related to Introduction to Health Law and the development of a Research project that addresses the elaboration of a logical model for evaluating graduates of the respective specialization course (2024-2027)⁴.

The ACT of the Course, in partnership with SEJUSP, presented a work plan that defined the educational actions to be carried out in face-to-face and distance formats, aiming at health training for workers in the Prison System of MG, security workers who work in the Prison System, and the general public who have an interface with the theme. 5 The educational actions in question are guided by content systematized in the publication of the book *Health and Work in the Prison System*.

It is worth noting that both agreements are monitored by partner institutions. With regard to the Specialization Course in Health Law, the Coordination provides periodic reports on the goals established in the various editions of the Specialization Course. In 2025, the three actions provided for in the ACT Work Plans were the subject of a report requested by the TJ/MG,

describing the results and goals of the partnership, which was included in the Good Practices Portal of the Judiciary of the National Council of Justice (CNJ).

With regard to monitoring by SEJUSP/MG, the current agreement is monitored by a designated public servant who oversees the development and implementation of actions and periodically dialogues with the School team that coordinates these agreed-upon actions. This communication channel has promoted greater interaction with the leadership of the student's home institution. Thus, solutions are favored in relation to academic difficulties inherent to attendance and permanence in the course, for example.

This issue refers to the perception of ESP/MG managers and technicians, as already mentioned, regarding the importance of legal and public terms that establish the partnership between institutions, which is strategic for guaranteeing protected hours for workers in terms of their continuing or permanent education. In addition, the partnership enables the construction of knowledge through the proximity of teaching, management, and service.

The Construction of Knowledge through an Interdisciplinary Perspective

The discussion of the curriculum content for the Specialization Course in Health Law was developed with academic support from CEDEPISA/USP and law schools such as Campo Belo/UNIFENAS and the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG). Consequently, the course coordinators at ESP/MG structured the curriculum with the support of institutional partners gradually involved in offering the course, which today officially include: SES/MG Secretariat, AGE/MG, Public Defender's Office/MG, MP/MG, and TJ/MG.

The construction of knowledge in the course, that is, the interdisciplinary teaching-learning process that is sought, depends on the diversity of students from the aforementioned institutions, including ESP-MG employees and state health advisors in MG. This diversity has increased since the growing demand from municipalities was met in the last classes, with the publication of a call for applications for students from municipal health systems, with higher scoring criteria for municipal health advisors.

A different approach was taken for the initial design of the curriculum for the current Specialization Course in Public Health with an emphasis on the Prison System. In 2018, before the Coordination of Education, Work, and Health (CETS) took over the management and execution of the course in question, the demand was taken on by the School's Coordination of Health Promotion, Care, and Surveillance (CPCVS), which had recently conducted a field research using a technique called Mapa Falado⁸. This learning was then applied to the service, guiding a diagnosis of the training needs of prison unit workers, a health reference in the state of Minas Gerais. The richness of the content, organized according to Carlos Matus' situational flowcharts, supported the design of the

course's disciplinary content, in addition to revealing a slice of reality unknown to most of the civil servants involved in the action.

It should be noted that the curriculum of the Specialization Courses discussed here is modular, organized by subject, as demonstrated in the respective Pedagogical Projects. With regard to the Health Law Course, Module I seeks to introduce topics related to the field of Health Law, basing the teaching-learning process upon knowledge of Public Health and Law. Module II addresses the organization of public health policies, bringing to the discussion topics (problems of the state of health and the health system) that affect or impact the implementation of public health policies. Module III seeks to bring applied content related to Health Law through Bioethics, Social and Human Sciences, and Legal Responsibility. The subjects Interlocution of Health Practices and Scientific Methodology are transversal throughout the course.

With regard to the course content involving the prison system, there is a similarity with the approach mentioned above, since part of the current curriculum is based on the traditional Specialization in Public Health course at ESP/MG, whose first class was in 1947. It should be noted that the complexity of the reality of health in the prison system requires the articulation of different fields of knowledge. In this project, we opted for a teaching-learning concept anchored in the theoretical references of Human Rights and Prison Sociology, in interface with Public Health, organized as disciplines that articulate these concepts in the development of the entire curriculum.

Thus, the Specialization Course in Public Health – Health in the Prison System has a matrix composed of six sequential and integrated modules, consisting of interdependent themes, which are indispensable elements for the development of theoretical knowledge. Module I – Health, Society, and Incarceration; Module II - Public Health and the Unified Health System; Module III - Health Care in the Prison System; Module IV - Communication and Health Education; Module V - Epidemiology and Health Surveillance; and Module VI - Knowledge Production and its application in the Final Course Project (TCC). Most of the topics are covered in modular and cross-cutting subjects. The cross-cutting subjects refer to Thematic Seminars and Scientific Methodology, which are common to all modules and whose course load and grades comprise Module VI.

Thus, the curriculum content of the Specialization Courses in Health Law and Public Health-Health in the Prison System undergoes continuous adjustments based on inter-institutional discussions. The assessment carried out by students, as established by the school, also supports the dynamic nature of the Pedagogical Projects, addressing aspects of the subjects, teachers, infrastructure, and course coordination, module by module. The report by the ESP/MG Self-Assessment Committee in 2024, which focused on the School's Postgraduate Courses, also contributed with evidence and recommendations regarding the improvement of the teaching-learning process and the Specialization Courses offered by the institution in a general manner.

So where is the interdisciplinarity? It is in practice, where topics are addressed in a way that explores and promotes reflection on their complexity and the dialogical discussion of problem situations that are felt and/or perceived in different ways by students in their different fields of work, without disregarding the fact that these individuals, as social actors, bring with them different life stories and understandings of the determination of the way of life (conditions and lifestyles) of social groups.

Interdisciplinarity is also achieved through cross-disciplinary courses and seminars that seek to share experiences among managers, technicians, and users in the field of health, intertwining areas and sectors of law, security of organized or unorganized civil society, and health itself.

DISCUSSION

Critical awareness of the premise of the contradictory is the key point for course coordinators and teachers to conduct curricular content via an interdisciplinary teaching-learning process. It is about challenging and exposing oneself to theories and points of view that are not always convergent, but also competing and even divergent. It is precisely the construction of learning through different areas of knowledge, practices, and life stories that sustains interdisciplinary work, through classes with active methodologies, seminars with experts, and experiences with health practices that reveal the richness and relevance of public health. In this way, the disciplinary content gains strength and breaks down barriers, shaping and contributing to changes in students' daily work practices, through knowledge and understanding of aspects of reality that were previously unknown or unrecognized and that now guide and enhance actions in favor of the Right to Health.

It is true that courses that depend on intersectoral actions, in the current situation, face obstacles that limit their continuity. The agendas of those involved, the interests of each agency and respective sector must reach a minimum consensus to enable educational action. In the meantime, the formalization of interinstitutional agreements beyond the normative aspect, by taking on a strategic character through shared responsibilities and powerful monitoring and evaluation systems, including external monitoring of the agencies involved, brings about the concrete realization of established quality and the daily action of innovation.¹⁰

The teaching-service-research interface, which is evident in the Experience Report in question, also contributes to the quality and sustainability of the courses, considering the list of those involved who legitimize the action in different institutional settings, with the construction of interdisciplinary knowledge under the shape of evidence that responds to poorly structured social problems.² Thus, in the words of Professor Jairnilson Silva Paim at one of the past Congresses of the Brazilian Association of Collective Health (ABRASCO), institutions articulate themselves, but people interact, and this was a striking finding in the development of the courses analyzed by this study.

CONCLUSION

The demands of the educational actions described were based on theories that support the democratic rule of law, with the distinguishing feature being the driving force that initiated the educational action, where the course aimed at the prison system sought to fulfill a political agenda, and the course on health law was developed with an emphasis on the role of academia in anticipating, even in past decades, the importance of intersectoral dialogue in health for the implementation of the SUS. The institutionalization of partnerships in both educational actions surpassed the normative character due to the dynamism in improving, reinforcing commitments, and attending the interests of the authorities and the different actors of the institutions involved. In turn, this legitimacy contributed to the interface of knowledge and the involvement of students, teachers, researchers, experts, managers, and professionals from various fields of knowledge that spanned health, social sciences, humanities, politics, and topics in the exact sciences.

There is no theoretical-practical model or paradigm that encompasses the operationalization of courses focused on continuing or permanent education in Human Resources in Health. Even in unfavorable circumstances, regardless of the public policy to be implemented, what makes the construction of intersectoral actions and interdisciplinary knowledge feasible are the subjects involved in the process, whose interests and desires, even when divergent, are open to dialogue, allowing for a reinterpretation of social practices. Thus, even in a world characterized by fluidity, but which structurally can be alienating in terms of the social character of being, subjects-agents of life emerge and, as a result, possibilities for change are created.

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