

Management Based on Competence and the Professional Competencies of Nurses in the Hospital Context

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Abstract

Objective: To reflect on management based on competence and the professional competencies of nurses in the hospital context.

Method: This is a theoretical-reflective study conducted through search in the scientific literature and based on the authors' experiences. The study is based on two currents: "The notion of competence" and "People management based on competence and competencies of nurses".

Results: It was found that professional competencies are seen as knowledge, skills and attitudes that may differ in organizations and in the work situations of hospital nurses, and are essential for the quality of care.

Final Considerations: People management based on competencies emerges as a strategy for the systematic development of teams. Particularly in the hospital context, this management can guide actions for the identification, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of professional competencies, contributing to both the development of the professionals and of the organization.

Keywords: Nursing; Hospitals; Professional Competence; Human Resources; Organization and Administration

Introduction

In the hospital scenario, technological changes, shared work, and the needs of users require specific competencies from their workers, often causing changes in their work process. In this sense, these institutions have sought informed, trained professionals who have a general view of organizational processes and internal and external environmental influences on the company's management.

Awareness of the need to provide quality health care is no longer an isolated attitude, but rather a technical and social imperative resulting from several reasons, among which the increasing demands for care, the increasing costs of maintaining services, the limited resources and the presence of users who are more demanding and aware of the rights they have stand out [1,2]. In this sense, in order to provide quality care, hospitals seek to adapt, using management methods such as the management of knowledge and competencies. In this new configuration, the skills of workers qualify them for professional practice.

The theme "professional competence" has been a focus of attention for hospital managers, and also for the professionals of these institutions. This fact is particularly true in Nursing in view not only of its large representation in health organizations in terms of number of professionals, especially in hospitals, but also due of the need of these professionals to remain (24 hours) in these services, coordinating the assistance and becoming a link between members of the multiprofessional team [3].

The trend in health organizations is to seek skills that help professionals in the obstacles and challenges that arise. In the nursing work process in hospital units, nurses have assumed the care for the most serious patients, developing care and management activities that require specific skills in order to guarantee the quality of care provided [4].

In this regard, it is known that professionals with managerial positions or attributions, as it is often the case of nurses, have an important role in improving the performance of health organizations, and the evaluation of performance based on competencies is a possibility to monitor the quality of the services provided [5]. In this perspective, the skills of nurses as professionals may interfere positively or generate negative effects for the patient, as well as for the organization itself.

It is known that professional skills represent a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes that each worker has and that serves as a reference for building their development in the company [6]. In this sense, when it comes to professional competence, it is necessary to see it as related to the work performance of a person which can be measured, compared with established standards and developed through training [7].

It is believed that, even at the institutional level, the survey of professional competencies in the organization is essential to have an updated picture of the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for a given function. In this perspective, organizations must develop people management processes that provide support and consistency for the existing transformations in the company, with the main objectives of valuing the professionals and their competencies, encouraging the continuous search for training, in addition to enabling the integration of the various practices of the human resources of the organization in order to point to a common direction.

Aim of the Study

This study aims to reflect on management based on competence and the professional competencies of nurses in the hospital context.

Materials and Methods

This is a theoretical-reflective study based on the literature and on the authors perception carried out with the goal of providing subsidies for a better understanding of this theme and to raise new questions and research perspectives. Books and articles from scientific journals published in the last 10 years and available in the Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO), Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System Online (PubMed) and Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature (CINAHL) were included. The following descriptors were used: Nursing; Hospital; Professional Competence; Human Resources and Organization and Administration.

Results and Discussion

The notion of competence

The term competence, widely used today, has undergone a process of reframing related to changes in the world of work. McClelland is probably the most cited author in the various conceptual approaches of competence [8].

In this theme, we can see the existence of two major theoretical currents. The first is represented by North American authors (Boyatzis, Maccllelland), who understand competence as a set of qualifications that allow a person to do a certain job. The second current, represented mainly by French authors, associates competence not with a set of attributes of the person, but with what the individual produces or does at work [9].

The introduction of French authors like Le Boterf, Zarifian contributed to the conceptual and empirical enrichment of the term competence. For Zarifian the concept of competence converges to the articulation of three dimensions: knowledge, skills and attitudes. Knowledge corresponds to the information assimilated by an individual that allows him to understand the world, that is, the dimension of

knowing. Skill is associated with know-how, that is, the ability to make use of the acquired knowledge and use it in an action to achieve a specific purpose. Finally, attitude is the dimension of the want-know-do, which concerns the social and affective aspects related to work. The three dimensions of competence are interconnected and interdependent [10].

Thus, sets of human capacities justify a high performance based on people's intelligence and personality, that is, competence is perceived as a stock of resources that the individual holds. And although the focus of the analysis is on the individual, most American authors point to the importance of aligning competencies with the needs established by positions in organizations [11,12].

However, the term competence should not be restricted to the simple purpose of know-how so as to avoid a bureaucratic and automated practice that excludes the subjectivity, reflection and creativity of those who perform it [13]. On the contrary, habitual and judicious use of communication, knowledge, technical skills, clinical reasoning, emotions, values and the ability to reflect on daily practice is necessary for the benefit of the individual and the community [14].

In view of this premise, Zarifian considers competencies as taking on responsibility, taking initiatives about professional situations that the employee faces. They are situations in which the acquired knowledge is transformed as the variety of situations increases, which occurs without previous notice, unexpectedly and interferes with the normal schedule of activities [10].

Still, the concept of competence, with its multiple approaches, may differ among organizations and work situations, and yet, competencies have become key points that have enabled institutions to have human capital with knowledge, skills and attitudes to respond to the challenges of the globalized world [15].

Thus, in the current scenario, organizations seek greater competitiveness and differentiation in the market through people and their competencies, bringing a model appropriate to the reality of the new times - management based on competence. This management appears as an alternative to the management models traditionally used by organizations, aiming to guide their efforts to plan, capture, develop and evaluate the professional competencies (at different levels of the organization - individual, collective and organizational) necessary to achieve their goals [16].

Therefore, the evaluation of competencies and the alignment of professionals around a common objective is important. This can occur through a People Management model focused on competencies, an alternative to traditional management models, aiming to guide their efforts to plan, capture, develop and evaluate the competencies necessary to achieve the objectives of the organization.

People management based on competence and competencies of hospital nurses

In order to create strategic plans and rules following guidelines and ethical principles of a human resources policy, a manager needs to recognize the importance of people, interpersonal relationships and human behavior.

In a health organization, people management is the area where the characteristics and capabilities of the professionals are best known, contributing to the construction of organizational competencies in the selection, training and development of workers and their competencies [17].

Thus, health organizations where multiprofessional teams exist, such as the hospital organization, must have a strategic people management plan based on the following fundamental points: recognition of the importance of each individual's role in organizational effectiveness; establishment of partnerships in work teams; attraction and retention of talents, with their individual skills, aligned with the organization's objective and train; and development of competencies for professionals.

In this perspective, People Management based on Competence appears as a management model that aims to recognize, create and expand knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to add value to the organization and the individual [9]. It can be defined as a set of tools, instruments and methodological processes aimed at the strategic management of people [12]. Such a model becomes particularly useful for organizations for which improvement, innovation and organizational learning are determinant to their competitiveness, as it is the case of hospital organizations.

People management based on competencies in hospital organizations should aim to manage the existing gap of competencies, minimizing it and bringing the list competencies of professionals closer to those necessary for the institution to achieve its goals. To this end, in a manner consistent with the organizational strategy, it is necessary to integrate the various subsystems of people management, guiding their actions towards obtaining the essential competencies to achieve the objectives of the organization [18].

Still, it is necessary to discuss the necessary tools for the development of an effective competence management system. Some of such tools are: evaluation of performance based on competencies with a view to drawing desirable profiles for functions; individual or group interviews with those evaluated, to map potentials; feedback to those evaluated and feedback to people managers; training and guidance for using the data as a managerial tool for decision making [19]. The evaluation of performance with a focus on competencies stands out among these tools.

Such evaluation in management based on competence is a strategy of people management and should assist workers and managers in the diagnosis of potential of professionals and improvement of their performance. To this end, it is important to adopt technical-professional sets of knowledge and the ability to mobilize individuals in the organization to face challenges in their daily work [6].

In the case of the hospital organization, as mentioned, the nursing work process must be understood as a complex one that involves not only administrative-managerial aspects but also educational and investigative functions, the provision of care itself. Thus, there is a multiplicity of activities in the practice of nursing professionals that directly reflects on the excellence of the quality of the care provided [20]. Considering the managerial role of nurses in the hospital context, basic knowledge on people management is necessary. To this end, specific skills are required when nurses work with their work team.

In the United States of America, the Nursing Leadership Institute built a competence model for nurses, as managers of nursing services. In it, six competencies were described, namely: personal power, interpersonal effectiveness, financial management, human resources management, care with the team, with patients and with oneself, and systematized thinking. The model also described some additional attributes, such as optimism and resilience [21].

Still, at the international level, other researchers described competencies for nurses, distributing them in eight categories, namely: professional and ethical values and practices; nursing skills and intervention; communication and interpersonal skills; knowledge and cognitive skill; assessment and improvement of nursing quality; professional development; leadership management and teamwork and use of research [22]. More specifically in the hospital area, competence areas for nurses were highlighted, such as management, professionalism, problem solving, nursing process, and knowledge of basic principles [23]. In addition, the nurses' competencies related to safety and quality of care have already been extensively discussed at an international level [24,25].

In this perspective, Brazilian researchers also concerned with the necessary competencies for nurses in the hospital context developed studies. The ones that stood out the most were: nursing leadership, strategic vision, focus on patients and management processes, continuing education, decision making and communication [4,26].

Nowadays, it is perceived in the health area that the practice of competencies exercised in their daily routines is not well evaluated, and largely due to the management model implemented. Thus, the people management model based on competence is an alternative to

the traditional models employed, as it proposes to understand which competencies are fundamental for the organization, unfolding them into professional competencies and developing them in its workers.

When nurses working in hospital organizations, as managers of their teams, apply an effective people management model, they must use assessment tools that identify gaps in present competencies, as well as aid in professional guidance for the development of new competencies, leading, thus, to an effective and efficient nursing care performed in this context.

Conclusion

In view of the unpredictability and competitiveness of the contemporary context in which health organizations and specifically hospital organizations are inserted, the main differential aspect to be achieved is the effective and efficient management of the people who compose them.

Nurses in the hospital environment are responsible for the management of nursing services and assume the responsibility of taking decisions that integrate the managerial, care and teaching/research areas. This fact requires that these professionals implement people management models to value their team, with a commitment to identify gaps in their team's competencies and assist in their improvement.

In this context, people management based on competencies emerges as a strategy for the systematic development of teams. Particularly in the hospital context, this management can guide actions for the identification, monitoring, evaluation and improvement of professional competencies, contributing to both the development of the professionals and of the organization itself.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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