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**HEALTH PROMOTION AND HEALTH EDUCATION
CONCEPTIONS OF FUTURE NURSES AND OTHER UNIVERSITY
STUDENTS: INFLUENCE OF THE INITIAL TRAINING**

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Text:

According to WHO (2000), governments have the responsibility to promote their citizens' health. In order to fulfil this aim they should guarantee that the professionals of all sectors acquire appropriate knowledge, attitudes and competences to protect and promote health (WHO, 1999). On the other hand, no educational plan should avoid values, since they are the elements that shape up most people's choices (Vallejo, 2002). In order that the processes of Health Promotion (HP) and Health Education (HE) are impregnated with the values of equity and participation, they should be adopted by professionals and future professionals. For that, schools must assume this role of education for the values and should also identify their students' conceptions. Thus, the general aim of the present study was to compare the system of values in HP/HE conveyed in courses in the area of health, pre-school teaching, basic teaching and social service, in order to understand the relation between the conceptions to be taught and the taught conceptions.

For this purpose, we first carried out a content analysis of HP/HE models in national and international publications and developed a descriptive, comparative and cross-sectional study. For the latter an auto-filling questionnaire was applied to a sample of 709 students of seven university courses.

Through the content analysis of HP/HE models we identified a set of six axes of values in HP/HE: Social/Individual (Soc/Ind), Salutogenic/Pathogenic (Sal/Pat), Holistic/Reductionistic (Hol/Red), Equity/Inequality (Equ/Ine), Autonomy/Dependence (Aut/Dep) and Democratic/Autocratic (Dem/Aut) which constitute the analytical matrix of the study.

In the speech of the individual and official organisms the axes of Aut/Dep and Equ/Ine emerge more strongly and there is some preponderance of the axe Sal/Pat in the case of the individual authors, whereas in the programmes of

the Vila Real Nursing course (VR-N) and respective teaching documents the predominance of the axe Sal/Pat is overwhelming. In these programmes the Pathogenic pole prevails over the Salutogenic one, which never happens in the speech of the individual authors and official organisms. The axe Dem/Aut is always the least emergent one.

The mental representation of the health concept by the total of the students' sample was expressed in five key words (by decreasing order): Well-being, Hospital, Disease, Doctors and Nurses. The predominance of these key words is connected to a reductionist vision of the health determinants, centred in the system of health, excluding the other ones.

When looking at the evolution of the concept of health from the 1st to the 4th year of university training, the Braga Nursing course (BR-N) was the one with higher decrease in the key words associated to the reductionist vision of the term and, similarly, the course of Basic Teaching Teachers (BTT) was the one with more increases associated to the wide concept of health. In contrast, the VR-N course did not show substantial changes on the perspective of health, keeping the technical-centric view of health along training.

The majority of the students fits in the wide concept of HP (51%) and in the active concept of HE (75%), considering that the terms HP and HE are different concepts.

Training showed to strengthen the construction of a wider HP concept in the VR-N and in the Porto Nursing course (PO-N), in which we verify highly significant differences (χ^2 : $p=0,000$) from the 1st to the 4th year. The majority of the sample (87%) considers that HE has values to promote, being the concept responsibility the most indicated one.

A general tendency towards the positive poles of the values axes was found in most sub-samples: the highest scores were found in the courses BR-N and Medicine (MED) whereas the smallest means were in the Social Service course (SSO).

Only 41% of the students marked to have carried out some type of practical experience and from these, all of them indicated to accomplish activities of HE, mostly (42%) saying "Many times". The frequency of these activities increased from the 1st to the 4th year.

Based on these results, we present a proposal of guidelines for the initial training of nurses, aiming to contribute for the improvement of the quality of education and of the care offered to the population.