

Metamorphosis: Discipline, Time Management, and Personal Development

Metamorfose: Disciplina, Gestão do Tempo e Desenvolvimento Pessoal

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We are living through a unique integration process of considerable academic, scientific, and symbolic significance within Portuguese higher education in nursing. This process represents both the recognition of a solid institutional trajectory—anchored in tradition, pedagogical quality, and scientific production—and the opening of a new cycle that demands increased responsibility, strategic vision, and capacity for reinvention. This is a genuine institutional metamorphosis that challenges the academic community to critically reconsider its role in educating nurses for an increasingly complex world characterized by structural uncertainty and profound social change. Assuming a university dimension reinforces the centrality of nursing as an autonomous scientific discipline, an interdisciplinary field of knowledge, and a social practice committed to human dignity, social justice, and quality of healthcare. In this context, the curriculum is a core and structuring element of any educational project. Far from being a technical device or a mere plan of studies, the curriculum must be understood as a cultural, ethical, and political project—historically and socially situated—through which epistemological choices and fundamental values are expressed (Freire, 1987; Apple, 2019).

For many years, we have regarded the curriculum as a powerful instrument of social transformation, capable of shaping critical, reflective, and socially engaged professionals who can *navigate the world with a critical eye*. This understanding diverges from a neutral or technocratic view of education, aligning instead with critical perspectives of higher education that advocate for holistic student development by integrating scientific knowledge, ethical awareness, civic responsibility, and capacity for transformative action (Barnett, 2018).

We live in a time of inexplicable complexity and uncertainty. The fragmentation of knowledge, disciplinary hyper-specialization, technological acceleration, and productivity pressures challenge traditional models of teaching, learning, and assessment, particularly in the health sciences. Morin (2017, 2023) has warned of the urgent need to rethink the architecture of knowledge and proposes an epistemology of complexity that connects domains of knowledge, recognizes uncertainty, and values the interdependence of phenomena. In a complementary direction, Hoppers (2020) introduced the concept of pluralization of knowledge, advocating for a science open to epistemological diversity, conscious of its own incompleteness, and attentive to historically marginalized voices.

The integration into the University offers a privileged opportunity to (re)imagine the nursing curriculum by strengthening interdisciplinarity, the dialogue between science, humanities, and technology, and the link between teaching, research, and clinical practice. This reconfiguration does not end with structural or organizational reforms; it calls for a profound cultural and pedagogical metamorphosis, grounded in a humanistic and critical vision of integrated health education.

We propose three fundamental pillars to sustain this transformative process: discipline, time management, and personal development. Though distinct, these pillars are deeply interconnected and form the basis of a robust, ethically grounded education oriented to the complexity of professional nursing practice.

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Discipline is the foundation of intellectual, moral, and professional autonomy. According to Kant (2011), discipline should not be confused with mere obedience to external norms. Rather, it is expressed as the capacity for rational self-determination guided by universal ethical principles. In nursing, discipline translates into scientific rigor, professional responsibility, fidelity to deontological values, and commitment to quality and safe care. Peck (2018) further expands this perspective by associating discipline with delaying immediate gratification, accepting personal responsibility, pursuing truth, and seeking balance. These dimensions are particularly relevant in demanding and emotionally challenging professional contexts where ethical decision-making, managing uncertainty, and resilience are essential competencies.

Time management is closely linked to discipline and is a critical transversal competency in a world marked by acceleration, informational overload, and a culture of permanent urgency. The digitalization of academic and clinical processes, the multiplicity of tasks, and the ubiquity of communication technologies pose significant obstacles to concentration, deep reflection, and psychosocial balance (Bauman, 2022).

Classical prioritization tools, such as the Eisenhower Matrix, remain relevant because they help distinguish between what is urgent and what is truly important. However, in addition to management techniques, an ethical reflection is needed on the use of time as a finite resource and as a determinant of quality of care is necessary. Morin (2017) warned that creation, reflection, and relationships might be crushed by the logic of production and immediate consumption—a warning that echoes Huxley's (2014) dystopian critique of the instrumentalization of the human. Personal development, the third pillar of this proposal, is a continuous process of self-knowledge, identity construction, and professional transformation. According to Vygotsky's (2007) sociocultural theory, individuals are constituted through their relationships with others, which are mediated by language, culture, and shared social experiences. In nursing, this relational dimension is particularly relevant given that care is, by nature, a deeply human, intersubjective, and ethical act.

Thus, reflective practice emerges as a structuring element of professional development. Dewey (2008) introduced reflective thinking in 1910 as an active, persistent, and careful process of analyzing experience. Schön (1982), on the other hand, distinguished reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action as central mechanisms of professional learning. These perspectives have been widely applied in nursing education, fostering professionals who can learn from experience, question established practices, and adapt to complex and unpredictable contexts (Sá-Chaves, 2005). Alarcão (2001) further argues that critical reflection enhances awareness of the values, beliefs, and assumptions that guide educational and professional actions, promoting more ethical, responsible, and socially committed practices. Therefore, personal development cannot be separated from professional development or from the social responsibility inherent in nursing practice.

Embracing the institutional and curricular metamorphosis demanded by this historical moment requires courage to question established paradigms and openness to change. As Rushdie (1998) metaphorically suggested, every rebirth entails the symbolic death of old certainties. Complexity, far from signifying disorder, reflects the recognition of uncertainty, contradiction, and incompleteness as intrinsic characteristics of reality. Morin (1989) proposed that human and social development be built within the tension between diversity and unity.

The scientific contributions published in the *Journal of Nursing Referência* reflect this dynamic of knowledge (re)construction. Its successive issues demonstrate the vitality of nursing research and its commitment to quality of care, sustainability of health systems, and social justice.

In a time of profound demographic, epidemiological, and technological changes, nursing establishes is consolidating itself as a continually evolving scientific field, ready to address complex challenges with rigor, creativity, and ethical responsibility. Integrating the Nursing School of Coimbra into the University of Coimbra reinforces this commitment and enhances the conditions for robust, interdisciplinary, and internationally relevant scientific production. Progress does not mean repeating history; it means having the courage to build a new one.

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