

First civil service examination for nurses at the Administrative Department of Public Service

Primeiro concurso público para enfermeiros do Departamento Administrativo do Serviço Público
Primer concurso público para las enfermeras del Departamento Administrativo de la Función Pública

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to describe the results of the first national public service examination for nurses conducted by the Administrative Department of Public Service between 1941 and 1942. **Method:** historical-documentary research with a quantitative approach. **Results:** 155 candidates registered, aged between 21 and 35 years old, 141 (91%) of whom were female. A total of 120 candidates passed the practical exam. Of these, 116 took the written qualification exam. In the end, 107 were approved, 74 (69.1%) of whom were temporary public nurses, 59 (55.1%) Anna Nery Nursing School alumni, and 10 among the first 20 twenty became involved with the Brazilian Association of Nursing later. **Conclusion:** although the exam legitimized the merit-based culture in the staff selection in the area of Brazilian nursing, egalitarian criteria were mitigated, especially regarding the grades applied to different kinds of exams. This resulted in a significant number of temporary nurses approved.

Key words: History of Nursing; Public Administration; Personnel Selection.

RESUMO

Objetivo: descrever o resultado do primeiro concurso público nacional para enfermeiros realizado pelo Departamento Administrativo do Serviço Público, entre os anos de 1941 e 1942. **Método:** pesquisa histórico-documental, de abordagem quantitativa. **Resultados:** inscreveram-se 155 candidatos, com idade entre 21 e 35 anos, sendo 141 (91%) do sexo feminino. 120 candidatos foram aprovados na prova prática. Desses 120 candidatos, 116 prestaram a prova escrita de habilitação. Ao fim, 107 foram aprovados, sendo que 74 (69,1%) eram interinos do serviço público, 59 (55,1%) egressos da Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery e 10, entre os 20 primeiros aprovados, tiveram participação posterior junto à Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem. **Conclusão:** embora o certame tenha legitimado a inserção da cultura do mérito na seleção de pessoal na Enfermagem brasileira, percebeu-se mitigação de critérios isonômicos, sobretudo no que se refere à atribuição de conceitos entre as modalidades de provas, resultando na aprovação expressiva dos interinos.

Descritores: História da Enfermagem; Administração Pública; Seleção de Pessoal.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: describir los resultados de la primera licitación nacional para las enfermeras realizadas por el Departamento Administrativo de la Función Pública, entre los años 1941 y 1942. **Método:** la investigación histórica y documental con un enfoque cuantitativo. **Resultados:** registrada y tenía 155 candidatos, de entre 21 y 35 años, con 141 (91%) eran mujeres. 120 candidatos han pasado el examen práctico. De estos 120 candidatos, 116 han aportado pruebas por escrito de calificación. Al final, 107 fueron aprobados, de los cuales 74 (69,1%) eran servicio provisional civiles, 59 (55,1%) los graduados de la Escuela de Enfermería Anna Nery y 10, entre el 20 primario autorizado, tuvieron mayor participación de la Asociación Brasileña de Enfermería. **Conclusión:** a pesar de que el evento ha legitimado la inclusión de la cultura mérito en la selección de personal en la enfermería brasileña, que se encuentra a sí misma criterios isonómico de mitigación, especialmente en cuanto a la asignación de conceptos entre los tipos de pruebas, lo que resultó en la aprobación significativa el interino.

Palabras clave: Historia de la Enfermería; Administración Pública; Selección de Personal.

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INTRODUCTION

The period between 1930 and 1945, when president Getúlio Vargas governed Brazil, became a milestone in the Brazilian social, political, and economical scenario due to the breakup between the government and the ruling oligarchy, as well as the changes in the country's economy with the beginning of the industrialization process and the economic internationalization⁽¹⁾. This period was divided into three consecutive phases: Temporary Government (1930-1934), Constitutional Government (1934-1936), and the New State Dictatorship (1937-1945). Various institutions were created, both with the intention of organizing social sectors, such as the Department of Education and Health (1930) and the Department of Industry, Commerce and Labor (1930), and to foster economic acceleration, such as the mining company Vale do Rio Doce (1942) and the National Steel Company(1941)⁽¹⁾.

The aspirations for the country's economic leverage, however, would not be guaranteed solely by the creation of these institutions or agencies. The public administration's inability was the greatest hindrance to this goal. It was necessary to take measures to change the public ideological and administrative structure, which was pervaded by vices like patronage, patrimonialism, and anarchism; in short, the bureaucratic rationalization of the state was urgent⁽¹⁻²⁾.

In order to reach this goal, Getúlio Vargas created, through Decree Law N. 284 of 1936, the Civil Service Federal Council (CFSPC, as per its acronym in Portuguese) based on the American model of the United States Civil Service Commission of 1893. The Council should study and establish the necessary measures for improving public services, as well as standardizing federal public institutions and proposing plans to rationalize them⁽³⁻⁴⁾. The CFSPC remained active for a little less than two years, enough time to be considered the precursor of an innovative administrative project to reorganize the public services, established by Decree Law N. 579 of July 30, 1938, called the Administrative Department of Public Service (DASP, as per its acronym in Portuguese)⁽⁵⁾.

The DASP was aimed at researching, studying and offering general guidelines for the solution of Brazil's public administration problems. The department was immediately under the president of the republic's cabinet, influenced by the Bureau of the Budget and the Civil Service Commission of the USA⁽⁶⁾. The DASP is thought to have articulated Brazil's first attempt of bureaucratic insulation, creating an important technical rationality, especially from the establishment of new organizational criteria for organizing the "state bureaucracy"⁽⁷⁾. Practically, it was the most significant Brazilian experience against administrative inertia and, to a great extent, the major actor of the administrative reform. It proposed the replacement of clientelism, patrimonialism and bureaucratic waste in Brazil for a model based on efficiency, meticulous selection of candidates for public office, and the rationalization of production and planning methods^(2,4).

The DASP was structured into 11 departments⁽⁵⁾: 1- Advisory Board; 2- Organization and Coordination Division; 3- Staff Studies Division; 4- Staff Guiding and Control Division;

5- Selection Division; 6- Improvement Division; 7- Materials Division; 8- Budget Division; 9- Work Division; 10- Documentation Division; and 11 - Administrative Division. We highlight the fact that the DASP pioneered the fostering of modernization and rationalization to the federal public service. Regarding human resources, we should stress the activities carried out by the Selection Division classified under five "Sections": Planning, Recruiting, Registration, Tests, and Control.

This division caused, at least theoretically, a breakup with the paradigm that prevailed until then, which stated that public jobs functioned as "professional laziness," inasmuch it defined strict guidelines for selecting candidates for public positions through sensible and elaborate civil service examinations^(1,7). Historically, the attempts to moralize the selection of public personnel in Brazil had been in vain until the inception of the DASP. In fact, as far as it is known, the first law that standardized civil service examinations dates from October 4th, 1831. The law regulated the selection process for positions in the Treasury Department but did not have clear criteria whereby merit would prevail. In spite of other attempts over time, the criteria applied for public personnel selection processes were unclear. Therefore, in 1922, during president Epitácio Pessoa's administration, it was established that citizens who wished to serve in the public office should know how to read, write, and count^(4,8).

Regarding Brazilian nursing, isolated evidence was found of selection processes that had preceded the DASP in the beginning of the 20th century, precisely in 1909. The criteria were unclear and applied exclusively to the recruitment of nursing officers for the Navy Auxiliary Corps of Officers⁽⁹⁾.

The DASP civil service exams were administrated to fill vacancies in various professions (engineers, dentists, physicians, lawyers, etc.), including nurses⁽⁸⁾. Nurses were undergoing a unique situation at the time. There was an expansion of professional nursing schools at the same time when conflicts for the legitimation and regulation of the profession occurred. With the foundation of public undergraduate nursing schools reference-model such as the São Paulo Hospital School of Nursing, in 1939, and the University of São Paulo School of Nursing, in 1942, the requirement to equate the new schools to the standard institution-Anna Nery, as defined by Decree 20,109 of 1931, began to lose momentum⁽¹⁰⁾.

When it comes to the relation between the DASP and nursing, we must highlight the position of the Brazilian Association of Nursing Graduates (ABED, as per its acronym in Portuguese), later called the Brazilian Association of Nursing (ABEn, as per its acronym in Portuguese), which took a stand against the public services exams for nursing professionals. In the agency's view, such selection process could be disputed by practicing nurses who were not graduates of the discipline⁽¹¹⁾. Despite the attempt to prevent the examination, it took place between 1941 and 1942. However, the regulatory framework for the exam, best known as "public notice," stated that it was targeted only at nurses who had a degree in nursing issued by an official or duly recognized school⁽¹²⁾.

After learning about the existence of a public selection process for nurses nationwide that occurred more than 70 years

ago, as well as the singular stand taken by the ABEn in that regard, the authors of this study became acutely interested in investigating the subject. That interest eventually elicited the following research question: What was the result of the first national civil service examination for nurses conducted by the DASP between 1941 and 1942?

The reasons for developing this study include the novelty of the theme, since no studies were found both in Brazilian and international scientific literature that researched selection processes for nurses conducted by the DASP. Few studies address the theme of public selection of human resources in nursing, both nationally and internationally. After continuous searches conducted in electronic databases, only two national studies were found concerning the selection of nurses for the Armed Forces in the 1980s⁽¹³⁻¹⁴⁾ in addition to a single Spanish study⁽¹⁵⁾, published in 2014, which analyzed criteria for public selection of permanent statutory nursing staff in the Spanish Autonomous Communities between 2007 and 2012. Another reason is the extent of the object *per se*, since the DASP was a modernizing milestone in the public administrative structure, especially when establishing a merit-based system for the exercise of public services. The DASP included numerous professional classes in this new mentality, including nursing. Finally, this study is also justified by the historical and social representation deriving from the detailed knowledge of the final outcome, the performance of candidates, and the conduction of all stages, by organizers, of the first national selection of nurses based on merit.

In view of these facts, the objectives of the present study were to describe and analyze the result of the first civil service examination conducted by the DASP nationwide between 1941 and 1942 and to identify and describe the candidates who passed the exam in the first places.

METHOD

This is a descriptive, historical-documentary study, understood as that which departs from authentic documents, widely applied to the process of scientific inquiry in order to describe and compare social facts, establishing their characteristics or trends⁽¹⁶⁾.

Direct data sources included documents found in the National Archive collection under the name "DASP Fund" and issues of the Brazilian Federal Government Gazette (DOU, as per its acronym in Portuguese) that had information pertaining to the examination's registration, tests, performance, and candidates' final classification.

The period considered was between 1938 and 1945. The year of 1938 marked the inception of the DASP and 1945 was the year when the human resources selection activities diminished. The agency, then, carried out only consultancy activities. The collection of data began with online queries to the website that encompasses the Brazil jurisprudence database (JusBrasil)⁽¹⁷⁾. The terms searched were "DASP", "Examination", and "Nurse", which provided a substantial number of results. After refinement through the attentive reading of the source content, 26 pages published between July 4th, 1940 and June 26, 1942 were accessed.

Between May and June, 2014, we held two visits to the National Archive in the city of Rio de Janeiro and searched the "DASP Fund" archives. This enabled the selection of 12 documents totaling 22 pages, which were copied electromagnetically and had their originality certified by the respective institution. Also at the National Archive, the authors compared images captured from the DOU to their original issues to verify the said documents originality. Other document sources collected at the Center for Research and Documentation of Contemporary Brazilian History (CPDOC-FGV, as per its acronym in Portuguese) were also used, as well as sources from the Anna Nery Nursing School of the Rio de Janeiro Federal University (CEDOC-EEAN-UFRJ, as per its acronym in Portuguese), located in the city of Rio de Janeiro and visited in August, 2014.

We carried out the analysis through repeated individual readings, which enabled us to organize the content by theme groups, subscribing to the logic of similarity and relevance of the information. After that, a database was built using Microsoft Excel[®]. In some spreadsheets, information concerning the administration of the examination in its different phases was recorded. This enabled the application of descriptive statistical treatment, with verification of simple and relative frequencies and the calculation of central tendency measures (mean, mode and amplitude). At the end of the analysis the data were interpreted, which resulted in the construction of results. The latter were, in turn, described and presented as graphs and tables and later discussed based on the appropriate scientific literature.

As determined by the current law⁽¹⁸⁾, the research proposal was submitted to the analysis of the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of São Paulo – UNIFESP and approved, as per opinion stated in Letter N. 0406/2014 of December 10, 2014.

RESULTS

The first civil service examination conducted nationwide in Brazil, administrated by the DASP between 1941 and 1942, received registrations from October 15 to November 13 of 1941. The Examining Board was formed by Five members: 1- Samuel Libânio (president); 2- Adauto Botelho (substitute president); 3- José Paranhos Fontenelle; 4- Pedro de Souza da Costa Sá; and 5 - Marina Bandeira de Oliveira.

A total of 155 nurses aged between 21 and 35 years old registered. Of these, 141 (91%) were female. Once the registrations were approved, the phase of mandatory tests began which were eliminatory (health and physical capacity), as well as the qualification exams (written test and optional complementary proof of title). The final judgment and establishment of the final grade resulted from a weighted average that applied a weight of 2 to the practical and qualification exams of and weight of 1 to the written exam. The result was calculated by adding up all the figures dividing the result by 3.

The selection tests included a practical service test and a health and physical capacity test. The last one checked candidates' organic and functional aptitude or ineptitude to perform

their respective activities. The practical test had a time limit of one hour to be performed and was based on the resolution of two techniques chosen from 12 techniques selected in advance, in addition to the creation and delivery of an individual report of the practice that had been performed. In this test, candidates could reach up to 100 points, resulting from the sum of the points for performance on both techniques, which could total up to 70 points, including their performance in writing their report, which could be worth up to 30 points.

The practical exam, which was the first one to be taken, occurred at the Anna Nery Nursing School between January 19 and February 26, 1942. Six dates had been previously defined for its occurrence. This test was taken by 140 people, 20 (14.2%) of whom scored between 7 and 52 points and had a mean of 22.5. This result fell into the elimination grade, which was any number lower than 60 points. The 120 people who passed the said test scored from 60 to 99 points. Their mean was 71.1, mode of 60 points, and the performance of most candidates fell into the interval between 80 and 89.9 points. Forty-two individuals (30%) fell into this category, as shown in Table 1.

Once 120 candidates were selected, the written qualification test took place on March 13, 1942, at school Externato Pedro II. This exam had a time limit of three hours and consisted of answering one question from a list of ten previously determined subjects. Even though this was not an eliminatory phase, 116 candidates participated in it. Three candidates did not show up; additionally, one candidate was not allowed to take the test due to the fact that she was a nursing clerk

undergoing the process of becoming a full nurse. The candidates' performance mean in this test was 57.1, the scoring amplitude between 25 and 94, and the mode was 45 points. Candidates' scores were concentrated in the interval between 50 and 59.9, where 36 individuals (31.1%) fell into, as it is seen in Table 1.

Between April 17 and May 14, 1942, the 116 candidates who had taken the written test took the health and physical ability test, conducted by technicians from the National Educational Studies and Research Institute (INEP, as per its acronym in Portuguese). For an unknown reason, six female candidates were disqualified in this test. Thus, 110 candidates remained, 92 (85.9%) of whom agreed voluntarily to offer proof of titles to improve their grades. Nevertheless, three of them did not have a final score of 60 and above and failed. That resulted in the approval of 107 of the 140 candidates who had begun the selection process.

The final approval rate was 76.4%, with a 75.9 performance mean. The scoring amplitude was between 60.8 and 95.6 points. The mode was 82 points. The scoring concentration, shown in Table 1, was found in the interval between 70 and 79.9 points, where 54 (50.5%) candidates fell. It is important to mention that of the 107 approved candidates, 91 (85%) presented proof of titles, thus improving their position in the final rank. We highlight the fact that these candidates scored a total of 8,540 points in the practical exam, 6,229 points in the written exam, 548.2 in the proof of titles, and 8,129 as the final result, making up the performance score means 79.8, 58.2, 5.1, and 75.9, respectively, per candidate.

Table 1 - Distribution of candidates of the first public service exam for nurses by the DASP in the practical exam, written exam, and final result, according to their score interval, Rio de Janeiro, Federal District, Brazil, 1942

Score	Practical exam		Written exam		Final result	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
90 - 100	21	15	4	3.5	5	4.5
80 - 89.9	42	30	3	2.5	25	23.5
70 - 79.9	33	23.5	15	13	54	50.5
60 - 69.9	24	17	22	19	23	21.5
50 - 59.9	2	1.5	36	31	-	-
40 - 49.9	7	5	25	21.5	-	-
30 - 39.9	1	0.7	7	6	-	-
20 - 29.9	6	4.3	4	3.5	-	-
10 - 19.9	3	2.3	-	-	-	-
0 - 9.9	1	0.7	-	-	-	-
Total	140	100	116	100	107	100

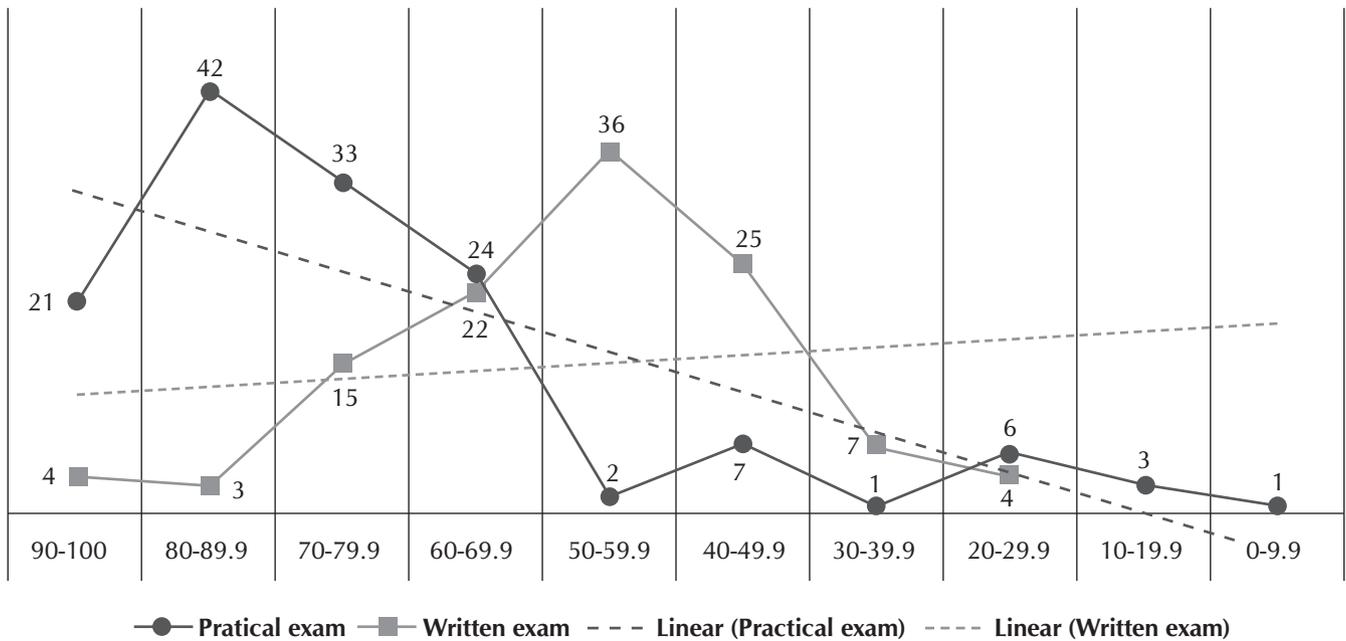


Figure 1 - Compared performance in the practical and written exams by candidates who underwent the first civil service examination for nurses at the Administrative Department of Public Service, Federal District, Brazil, 1942

In addition to the previous presentation of the number of candidates who passed the exams, we will present the nuances concerning candidates' characteristics such as the case of temporary nurses in the public service. The 82 temporary nurses in tenure positions who worked in various public agencies took the exam. As seen in Figure 2, the temporary workers were the majority of the candidates: of the 140 candidates who took the practical test, 82 (58.5%) already had previous connections with public services. This number of candidates did not change much in the written test 81 (69.8%) and composed the majority of the candidates who passed the final test: 74 (69.1%) candidates.

Regarding the proof of titles, of the 107 passing candidates, 91 (85%) presented their degrees, thus improving their position in the final rank. As for the identified tendencies, of the 91 candidates who produced proof of titles amongst the 107 passing candidates, 65 (71.5%) were temporary workers and their scores were added 5.2 points due to the proof of titles. The 26 (28.5%) who were not temporary workers were added an average 7.5 points due the proof of titles. Finally, only 16 (15%) candidates were not added any points due to the proof of titles. Of these, nine (56.3%) were temporary workers and seven (43.7%) were not.

Regardless of the limited sources for this study in terms of the passing candidates' identities, we were able to verify that ten candidates amongst the 20 first places had some kind of political activity in the ABEn⁽¹¹⁾. In Chart 1, we detail the performance by the said candidates throughout the selection process.

Regarding their schooling, 72 (51%) people enrolled for the examination who took the practical exam were Anna Nery Nursing School alumni, from the classes of 1931 through 1941. Of these, 59 (55.1%) were amongst the 107 candidates who passed the exam between the first and hundredth place.

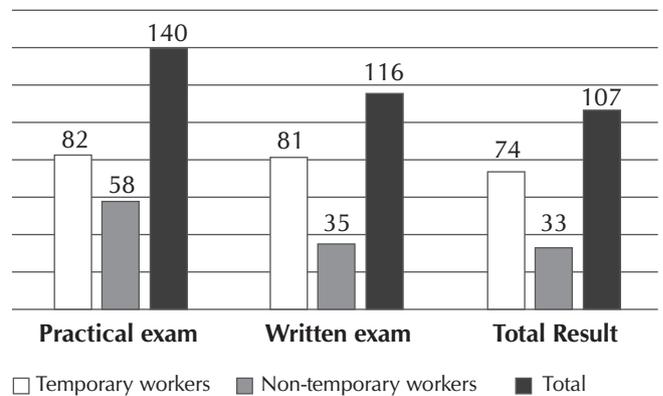


Figure 2 - Distribution of candidates in the first civil service examination for nurses at the Administrative Department of Public Service who had previous connections with the Federal Public Service, Federal District, Brazil, 1942

Of the 59 passing candidates, 44 (74.5%) were also temporary workers. Their performance means followed the general performance standards: 80.6 on the practical exam, 58.8 on the written exam, and 75.9 as a final result. On the proof of titles, the average addition to the score was of 3.8, keeping in mind that eight candidates did not present proof of titles.

It is worth mentioning that, at the end of the selection process, the final result was approved on June 20, 1942 by the DASP president, Luiz Simão Lopes Filho, and published in the Brazilian Official Gazette on the 26th of June of that same year. The results were valid for two years after their approval, as previously stated in the public notice for registrations⁽¹⁹⁾.

Box 1 - Distribution of the ten first nurses who passed the examinations for the Administrative Department of Public Service in Brazil in 1942 and who performed political activities connected to the Brazilian Association of Nursing

Ranking/Candidate	PE x 2	WE x 1	PT x 2	FR	Political activities
1 / Ana Jaguaribe S. Nava	194.8	92	0	95.6	1st Secretary – ABEn – National (1951)
2 / Alice Mattos Villela	182	94	6	94	Fiscal Board – ABEn – National (1952)
3 / Jacyra G. Carvalho	182.4	91	6	93.1	Library Organization – ABEn – National (1939)
5 / Firmina Sant’ Anna	192	80	0.5	91.5	Secretary of the Annals of Nursing Journal (1939)
6 / Emengarda J.F. Alvim	194	69	0	89	1st Secretary - ABEn – National (1951)
10 / Zilda Vieira Ramos	198	75	2.7	85.1	Fiscal Board –ABEn –National (1945)
12 / Lizellote Hischel	177.6	94	0.4	84.2	1st Secretary – ABEn – Guanabara (1946)
14 / Maria J. S. Teles	175.2	69	0	83.6	Founding Partner – ABEn – Rio de Janeiro (1949)
16 / Guiomar P. Pupain	176	64	4	83	2nd Secretary – ABEn – National (1943)
18 / Georgete J. Teixeira	183.2	58	6	82.4	2nd Secretary – ABEn – Amazonas (1950)

Notes: ABEn - Brazilian Association of Nursing; PE - Practical Exam; WE - Written Exam; PT - Proof of Title; FR - Final Result.

DISCUSSION

Regarding registration, we realized that all the candidates met the requirements listed in the legal framework published in the public notice for the civil service examination. However, we highlight that one of the requirements was the presentation, upon registration, of a nursing degree issued by an official or duly recognized school⁽¹²⁾. This fact constitutes clear evidence that only nurses participated in the examination.

Although the examination was exclusive for nurses, the only nursing specialist at the Examining Board was Marina Bandeira de Oliveira, who was the ABEn president between April, 1947 and July, 1948⁽²⁰⁾. As for the other members, Samuel Libânio was a founding physician of the Belo Horizonte Free Medical College; Aduino Botelho was a physician and a Full Psychiatry Professor at the National Medical College; and José Paranhos Fontenelle worked as a physician at the National Department of Public Health⁽²¹⁻²³⁾.

Even though we celebrate the presence of a nurse, we can see among the members of the Examining Board a reproduction of the prevailing logic existing in the medical class regarding nursing. Although the Brazilian nurses were still fighting to build their class identity, there was the intention, at the time, to maintain the domination of medical knowledge over nursing. Civil service examinations for physicians

carried out by the DASP are not known; however, we assume that no nurses were among the specialists who composed their examining board.

As mentioned above, the written and practical exams occurred at school Externato Pedro II and at the Anna Nery Nursing School, respectively. In this scenario, we highlight the use of the Externato Pedro II premises. The school was founded in 1837, during the imperial government. The fact that this institution was a pioneer when it comes to the structuring of Brazilian secondary education is well known. There are also signs that the school premises were used for various civil service examinations, including later editions of DASP exams⁽²⁴⁾. These findings can explain this choice as a test location.

Regarding the results *per se*, when comparing the candidates' performance on the practical and written exams, we verify that amongst the ones who took the first exam there is a clear deviation to the left in the performance tail, mainly when the candidates frequency is distributed in a percentage scale with a performance interval of 10 points. On the other hand, those who took the written exam had their results distributed along a shape that is closer to a normal skew, which is expected for these cases.

We take into account that the observed tendencies may be attributed to the fact that the practical exam was exclusively eliminatory. In fact, since the entry requirement was a 60-point

score, there would be a greater concentration of candidates above the minimum score, which deviates the tail to the left. Though this explanation seems reasonable, some questions emerge upon careful analysis of the data. In the practical exam, only 20 (14.5%) candidates scored less than 60 points, whereas 75 (53.5%) scored between 70 and 89.9 points. This differs completely from the relation of distribution of grades obtained in the written exam. Although the latter was not eliminatory and did not have a minimum entry requirement grade, 72 (62%) candidates scored below 60 points.

Even though we take into account the singularities and differences between the practical and written exams, our most solid hypothesis is that there was no consistency between them. This impression is made stronger once we consider the state interest in the participation of a particular group of candidates, as stated in Paragraphs 3 and 4 of Article 17 in Decree no. 1,713 of October 28, 1939⁽²⁵⁾, which demanded that the 83 temporary public nurses take this examination.

Though the statement above is questionable due to high speculation, there is considerable evidence of the state interest not only in the temporary workers' participation in the selection process, but also that the same workers should be among the passing candidates. This would explain why temporary nurses' failing rate was 9.7%, that is, only eight candidates. The rate was different among the other candidates, i.e., they had a far higher failing rate: 45.2% of candidates. In other words, of the 73 candidates who were not temporary workers and participated in the selection process, only 33 were among the 107 candidates who passed the final examinations.

Regarding the tendencies identified in the 91 candidates who took the proof of titles, in a compared ratio, we verify that the additional points granted by the proof of titles was a decisive factor to improve the candidates' ranking. The mean score in the final grade of those who did so was 89.3, whereas the candidates who did not present the proof of titles had a 78.7 score, on average.

Another relevant point concerning the proof of titles is based on the comparison between the candidates' average performance on the practical test plus the additional data in the proof of titles. This operation enabled the passing candidates who scored between 90.1 and 100 on the practical exam to add an average 1.6 points due to the proof of titles. Candidates who scored between 60.1 and 70 on the same exam were added an average 10.5 points by the proof of titles. Roughly, this ratifies the thesis that even though the purpose of the proof of titles was to improve the candidates' ranking, its actual result was an inconsistency by the examining board to establish the score. It became evident that reasoning behind that establishment granted a higher score to candidates whose performance was not outstanding on the practical exam.

Regarding the passing candidates' education, we verify that the Anna Nery Nursing School alumni were the majority. This stresses the contribution by this institution to the training of the group of workers in modern Brazilian nursing in the first half of the 20th century⁽²⁶⁾. With regards to the first ten candidates, who held political activities at the ABEn, we highlight that most of them held great responsibility roles such as

heads of departments, or were members of the ABEn National Board, except for two. The importance of their positions did not follow the decreasing order in the examination rank; nevertheless, the difference in their score was less than 14 points in the final result. In the written and practical exams, the difference among them was greater and three of them did not present proof of titles. One of them ranked first but this was not enough to change her position in relation to the others. This leads us to assume that degrees were not granted much importance at the time.

CONCLUSION

The examination in question legitimized the merit-based culture in human resources selection processes in the field of Brazilian nursing, despite the fact that the application of egalitarian criteria was mitigated. This raises suspicions regarding the perfect integrity of the process, such as the use of different grades applied to the practical and written exams, as well as the previous public notice that temporary nurses must take the test. At the end of the examinations, the latter composed the majority of passing candidates. Notwithstanding, we must consider that it is not reasonable to circumscribe the judgment of the examination to a limited view of its extent to the moment when it occurred. There was indeed a selection of candidates with the inclusion of people who did not have any previous connections to the public service. This happened also because the administrative conduction of the examination was granted, in all stages, with principles that are part of the merit-based culture such as publicity, legality, and free competition.

The selection process at hand was embedded in this unique dialectic dynamics: at the same time that it proposed an ideological administrative change in the selection of public workers, it was not solid enough to be disentangled and exempt from contemptuous influences and vices.

Therefore, a substantial part of the proposed change was kept only theoretically, given that questionable behaviors, facilitations and neglects were organized, institutionalized and consensually legitimated by a social contract from that moment on.

We also highlight the participation of a nursing professional in the organizing board and the perennial presence of the EEAN-UFRJ through its approved alumni, in addition to the subsequent political connection to the ABEn of the candidates who were first on the rank.

This study is a first approach to the performance of public workers selected through civil service examinations. For that reason, it was pervaded by limitations that influenced its conduction such as the lack of sources concerning the tests for each phase of the examination. In case there were reports and/or records by board members, they could have been analyzed.

Therefore, we suggest that studies of public selection processes in nursing should continue to be conducted, whether or not they involve the DASP and other subsequent examinations, so that we may better understand the transformation that occurred in this process from this pioneering initiative.

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