



ANALYSIS OF THE POLITICAL-PEDAGOGICAL PROJECTS OF HEALTH COURSES ON INTERPROFESSIONAL EDUCATION IN A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Objective: to analyze the conceptions and strategies of interprofessional education present in the Political-pedagogical Projects of graduate courses in the health area of a federal public university. **Method:** descriptive and documentary research, with a qualitative approach, carried out with the political-pedagogical projects of the courses in biomedicine, nursing, pharmacy, physiotherapy, medicine, nutrition and dentistry of this University. Data collection took place in the period from November to December 2022. For the organization and analysis of data, the Content Analysis was used in the thematic modality. **Results:** two categories and a subcategory were obtained, respectively entitled: "Conceptions that aim to interdisciplinarity"; "The multiprofessional work in line, but uniprofessional in the leads", and "Few advances in the conceptions and strategies of interprofessional education". The strategies aimed at interprofessional education are scarce and the structure of projects and curricula is predominantly uniprofessional. **Final thoughts:** interprofessional education in the studied scenario is incipient and there are few advances in the strategies formally provided for in the curricula, although there are attempts to approach it from a multidisciplinary work concept.

Keywords: Interprofessional Education. Curriculum. Health Strategies. Higher Education Policy. Universities.

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the healthcare scenario, due to its increasing complexity, requires the interaction of a wide range of health and social care professionals, generalists and specialists⁽¹⁾. Qualified health work is essential, since it is through the health care provided by workers that the quality of life of the population can be improved⁽²⁾.

In fact, the training of professionals with skills to act at different levels of care is a determining factor for improving health care, since a team that articulates its actions interprofessionally tends to act more efficiently, which contributes to the integral and decisive health care to the population. In this sense, developing collaborative interprofessional work is a fundamental step for the quality of health care, safety and satisfaction of patients and professionals themselves^(3,4).

In the health literature, sometimes the terms interdisciplinary and interprofessional are used as synonyms and indistinctly⁽²⁾. It is considered that the concept of the word interdisciplinary is related

to collaborative initiatives adopted by individuals from different areas of knowledge, who work together on the same project or problem to analyze, synthesize and harmonize interconnections⁽¹⁾. The concept of interprofessionality, in turn, advances towards health practices, to qualify health care by collaborative teamwork, in addition to the integration of knowledge, assuming a high level of interaction between different professional nuclei. This work configuration can increase patient safety, promote comprehensive care, humanize practices and improve workers' well-being⁽⁵⁾.

Multiprofessionalism, in another aspect, designates teams with less degree of interaction, developing a parallel and little interactive work, which reinforces a fragmented character of the work process⁽³⁾. The imprecision of concepts and terms is recurrent in the literature, which denotes the difficulty in obtaining consensus on the key elements that constitute teamwork⁽⁶⁾.

It is understood that interprofessional education and collaborative practice are central to the development of interprofessional work. The aim is

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to improve the health care of the population and the work experience of service providers, as well as reduce the costs of their services, and make universal health coverage a reality. Advances in this field of knowledge imply more research, with a view to deepening the contribution of collaborative practice in various health fields, especially because, although progress is observed in the area of training of health professionals, there are few challenges to be overcome in the constitution of curricula in the various training spaces and institutional realities⁽¹⁾.

From the presented panorama, the hypothesis established for this investigation (a priori questioning of the problem based on empirical experiences and first readings of the authors⁽⁷⁾) was that the strategies of interprofessional health education in many are scarce, isolated and poorly articulated, as well as lack conceptual clarity.

Thus, it is questioned: what are the conceptions and strategies of interprofessional education present in the Political-Pedagogical Projects of graduate courses in the health area at a federal public university?

In view of this, this research aims to analyze the conceptions and strategies of interprofessional education present in the Political-pedagogical Projects of graduate courses in the health area of a federal public university.

METHOD

This is a descriptive and documentary research, with qualitative approach. For the study and

research report, guide used was the Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ)⁽⁸⁾, which applies to qualitative studies with secondary data.

The study scenario was a federal public university based in a municipality in the south of the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. The university in question has seven courses in the area of health sciences: Biomedicine, Nursing, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Nutrition, Medicine and Dentistry.

To build the corpus, the study included the Political-Pedagogical Projects of graduate courses in the health area of the University, the research scenario, valid at the date of data collection and available for public access on its official website. The documents in formulation or debate in the Structuring Teaching Units (STU) or in the advisory and deliberative instances of the University (Collegiate Courses, Teaching and Research Council, for example) were excluded, because it is understood that the minutes, in the analysis and debate phase, still have no official institutional guidelines that will formally direct teaching strategies.

Data collection took place in the period from November to December 2022. An active search was carried out on the University's website to identify and select the Political-Pedagogical Projects that were part of the study. The material was collected and stored in PDF file for full reading. Seven documents were obtained, representing all the health courses of the study scenario (Chart 1).

Chart 1. Political-pedagogical projects of the health courses included in the study and their respective implementation date, Brazil, 2023.

Courses	Biomedicine	Nursing	Pharmacy	Physiotherapy	Medicine	Nutrition	Dentistry
Date of implementation	08/13/2009	11/27/2008	10/21/2019	09/12/2018	12/17/2009	06/29/2010	11/07/2018
Period in force at the time of data collection.	13 years	13 years	3 years	4 years	13 years	12 years	4 years

Source: Created by the authors (2023).

For the organization and analysis of data, content analysis was used in the thematic modality⁽⁷⁾, following the steps: 1) Pre-analysis, 2) Exploration of material; 3) Treatment of results and interpretations.

In the pre-analysis, the documents were selected to constitute the corpus, as mentioned. The

terms, words, phrases and meanings that translate the conceptions and strategies of interprofessional education were assumed as indicators for the analysis, representing the units of registration (meaning units, considered as a basic unit) or of context (larger segment of the message, required for understanding the meaning of the record unit).

It was assumed that if the educational guidelines in the health field recommend interprofessional education and the Political-Pedagogical Projects are documents of a political nature, which direct the teaching in the academic field, textual mentions and descriptions of interprofessional education concepts and strategies should be found in various sections of the documents, materializing initiatives to achieve this objective. At the end of this stage, there was the floating reading of the corpus.

In the material exploration phase, all fragments of the PPC that related to the object of study were identified, in any of the sections, including the elementary. These excerpts were copied to a text editing file in a three-column chart, the first containing all relevant fragments of text, extracted from the Political-Pedagogical Projects, the second with the respective units of record or context, and the third one with space for notes of the authors' reflections as the interpretation of empirical data was continued. At the end of this step, by grouping by similarity of the units of record and context, the thematic categories were obtained. The analysis and categorization were carried out collaboratively by the authors and coordinated by the study supervisor, who has experience in using the proposed methodological framework.

In the treatment and interpretation phase, the researchers, considered the significant results and could propose interferences and elaborate interpretations regarding the planned objectives⁽⁷⁾. The results were interpreted in light of the literature on interprofessional education.

The study was conducted with public domain texts, available in full on the University's website and did not require submission to the Research Ethics Committee.

RESULTS

The analytical work allowed the construction of two thematic categories and a subcategory. The first category was entitled: "Conceptions that aim at interdisciplinarity"; the second: "Multiprofessional work in line, but uniprofessional in the leads" and the subcategory, derived from this last: "Few advances in the conceptions and strategies of interprofessional education".

It was observed that the conceptions and strategies for interprofessional education are

incipient and there are few advances in the organization of the curricula of graduate courses in health, with a view to teaching interprofessional scope, prevailing a uniprofessional training paradigm.

Conceptions that aim at interdisciplinarity

References to interdisciplinarity were identified in the texts in a direct and indirect way in various contexts, although it is not possible to observe clarity in the use of the concept, as observed in the passages presented below:

To work in interdisciplinary teams and act as health promotion agent (PPC Dentistry, section Competences and Skills, p. 26).

To communicate with patients, health professionals and the community in general, enabling work in interdisciplinary teams and acting as a health promoter (PPC Dentistry, section Objectives, p. 20).

The process of interdisciplinarity is gradual and will be achieved through the exercise of joint and participatory planning, seeking to value skills, attitudes, values, knowledge to do and to be, the development of creativity, communication, teamwork, problem solving, social responsibility, entrepreneurial power, conflict management, important tools in a world in constant change (PPC Nursing, section Methodological Conceptions of Teaching, p. 52).

Besides these descriptions, interdisciplinarity is sometimes allied to the term transdisciplinary:

The Pharmacy course adopted as methodological guidelines the education based on the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary integration of theoretical and practical knowledge (PPC Pharmacy, section Curricular Organization, p. 49).

Notably, interdisciplinarity emerges in various forms in the Political-Pedagogical Projects, most often referring to the articulation of different disciplines in a process that aims at the intersection between the contents offered by the courses, in order to allow the student a broad vision about their area of expertise to integrate the various areas of knowledge. However, conceptual inaccuracy is observed when the term is applied to the teamwork process.

Multiprofessional work in line, but uniprofessional in the leads

Paradoxically, considering that the Political-Pedagogical Projects are based on conceptions aimed at interdisciplinary teaching, there were recurring references to multiprofessional work, that is, a work composed of different professionals who work side by side, in parallel:

Specific Skills and Abilities of the Nutritionist professional: [...] to work in multidisciplinary teams designed to plan, coordinate, supervise, implement, execute and evaluate activities in the area of food and nutrition and health. (PPC Nutrition, section Specific Skills and Abilities, p. 24).

In multiprofessional teamwork, health professionals should be able to assume leadership positions, always with the well-being of the community in mind (PPC Nutrition, section Specific Skills and Abilities, p. 22).

When analyzing the context of using the term multiprofessional, it is possible to see that the strategies for operationalization of education for work of this nature are not presented explicitly, so that multiprofessionality seems to occur in a punctual and accessory way:

Specific objectives: [...] to communicate effectively at all levels of care, through the ability to interact with the community, with managers, with multidisciplinary teams, with colleagues, with the patient and their family members or caregivers (PPC Medicine, section Specific objectives, p. 36).

In health care, the doctors who graduate [...] will be able to act: in the Family Health Strategy (FHS), in the prevention of diseases and in the promotion of healthy habits of life, implanting and stimulating health actions on individual and collective plans. For this, they will be able to work in multiprofessional teams (PPC Medicine, section Profile of the graduate, p. 41).

It was not possible to identify, in a substantial way, excerpts or mentions that allude to the way such process can be operationalized, as well as the tools for this were not identified, in terms of disciplines or pedagogical strategies. That is, although the documents highlight the importance of developing skills that depend on the integration of several professionals, they do not elucidate precisely which strategies will be used for this purpose:

The nurse member of a health team, leader of the nursing team acts with scientific knowledge and

technical skills, using the scientific methodology in the development of nursing actions (PPC Nursing, section Conception of the New proposal, p. 22).

The course aims to train the future professional for the exercise of general health care skills and abilities, decision making, communication, leadership, administration and management (PPC Physiotherapy, section Objectives, p. 19).

This perspective allows inferring that, while the aim is multiprofessionality-based education, the basis on which the pedagogical proposal is structured, and therefore the curricula, is predominantly uniprofessional.

Few advances in the conceptions and strategies of interprofessional education

In the same direction, it was found that the Political-Pedagogical Projects brought few mentions to interprofessional work. There are few fragments of texts that refer to it, even superficially, or even to its associated concepts: interprofessionality, networking and professional collaboration.

To meet the current health system in the country, provide comprehensive health care in the regionalized and hierarchical reference and counter-reference system and collaborate for teamwork (PPC Physiotherapy, section Profile of the Graduate, p. 25).

The student who graduated from the Biomedicine Course - Bachelor's degree, is expected to acquire skills to: [...] develop collaborative and teamwork habits (PPC Biomedicine, section Profile of the Graduate, p. 22).

[...] To stimulate interprofessional and collaborative work through scenarios of diversified practices, inserted in the community and health care networks, public and/or private (PPC Pharmacy, section Objectives, p. 24).

“Currently, interdisciplinary activities are developed with the development of interprofessional actions applied to the community, in addition to the stimulated practice of interaction between teaching, research and extension among students of the course.” (PPC Physiotherapy, section, section Tutorial Education Program, p. 52).

DISCUSSION

The present study sought to analyze the

concepts and strategies of interprofessional education present in the Political-pedagogical Projects of graduate courses in the health area of a single federal public university.

Interprofessional education, considered as a critical approach that aims to prepare the graduate students for entry into the health labor market, has been adopted in many educational systems, but its implementation is still limited in many countries⁽⁹⁾. Not differently, in the scenario studied, it was observed that the strategies for operationalization of interprofessional education are incipient and marked by conceptual imprecision.

It is considered that the Political-pedagogical Projects are not static, but dynamic and subject to continuous transformation. From this perspective, it is noteworthy that four of the seven documents analyzed are more than ten years old, which allows inferring that the analysis presented refers to a scenario of changes, since the documents may be in the revision phase. However, it is considered that the most recent projects also do not present strategies and conceptions that aim at interprofessionality, such as institutional policy and axis for graduate education in the health area at the University on screen.

Therefore, without initiatives that articulate the governance bodies of the University, with a view to establishing clear and measurable objectives, it is likely that the revised projects do not advance in this direction, even because the implementation of interprofessional education is hampered by the incompatibility of the curricular architectures of health courses and the departmentalized structure of universities, which favors the maintenance of hegemonic conceptions and practices in health education. It is important to note that there are still uncertainties about the best way to implement interprofessional education in university curricula. One of the main questions concerns the most appropriate time to introduce it to students^(10,11).

The concept of interdisciplinarity emerges in the Political-pedagogical Projects as the best means to operate teaching and to achieve real solutions and problems⁽¹²⁾. This may be related to the fact that interdisciplinarity is a contemporary movement that emerges in the perspective of the integration of disciplines and seeks to break with the hyper specialized and fragmented character of knowledge, passing through the discussions on Political-pedagogical Projects in educational

institutions⁽¹³⁾.

Nevertheless, even if rarely, the concept of transdisciplinarity also emerged in the documents analyzed. The literature defines it as a process in which an individual with knowledge of one discipline assumes functions or tasks of another discipline, assuming that, even outside the usual scope of his/her practice, he/she has the necessary experience to assume such functions^(1,3). However, the projects do not specify by which strategy the vocational learning relationships can advance to this point. If on the one hand this implies that the team members share knowledge, skills and responsibilities, crossing the boundaries of each discipline, on the other hand, in the studied Political-pedagogical Projects, transdisciplinarity seems to be considered only as a means of allowing the integration between disciplines, for the creation of curricular units⁽¹⁴⁾.

The few advances in effective integration between the courses evaluated relate to issues involving, besides conceptions, practices historically located in the operationalization of teaching. Thus, the fragmentary way in which the school curricula are structured, the functional and rationalist logic used to organize its staff of technical and teaching personnel, the resistance of educators when asked about the limits, the importance and relevance of their discipline and the demands of some sectors of society, which insist on a conception of increasingly utilitarian knowledge, are elements that may disadvantage interprofessional education⁽¹⁴⁾.

Allied to this, the predominance of the biomedical care model, which is based mainly on individual consultations and lacks articulated and interprofessional interventions, considerably damages the favorable changes to interprofessional education. In the same sense, the training of professors in health areas, predominantly aligned with the biomedical model, is characterized by the sometimes inadequate use of references on interdisciplinarity and interprofessionality concepts^(15,16).

In this direction, even if the comparative analysis of curricular proposals from other places is not the object of this research, it should be noted that other countries also have challenges to be overcome for an effective implementation of interprofessional education. In Australia, for example, interprofessional education has been

promoted as part of a reformulation of the health system to promote teamwork, improve patient care quality and health outcomes. In response, universities are starting to create and maintain authentic and inclusive interprofessional education activities in which students participate⁽⁹⁾.

In Kuwait, at the Health Sciences University Center, a cross-sectional research explored faculty members' attitudes towards collaborative practice and interprofessional education, their training needs and perceived barriers to its implementation. Two hundred and ten individuals (60%) completed the survey and expressed positive attitudes towards interprofessional health teams, interprofessional education and interprofessional learning in the Academy. However, barriers to operationalization were also reported, related to leadership, curriculum, and resistance to change⁽¹⁷⁾.

In Kenya, a study with 71 health sciences professors also pointed to possible resistance of the faculty towards interprofessional education. Although there were generally positive attitudes towards interprofessional education, negative attitudes towards this type of education were observed in academic environments⁽¹⁸⁾.

In the United States, a study that evaluated the attitudes of professional health educators from dentistry, nursing, medicine, pharmacy and public health, regarding professional education and teamwork at an academic health sciences center, identified that positive attitudes of professors were significantly higher in nursing⁽¹⁷⁾.

It is worth pointing out that, if on the one hand the effective implementation of interprofessional education is incipient in most universities, as in this scenario of the study, on the other hand, the interest and embryonic initiatives in this regard refer to the sixties, culminating in the creation of the National Committee for Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Patient-Centered Practice (IECPCP) in Canada in 2003. The main objective of the initiative was to integrate academic education and health services, which is essential for strengthening education and interprofessional collaboration⁽⁹⁾.

This puts into perspective the need for a greater understanding of the factors that influence the implementation of interprofessional education in the different micro-spaces, especially in the national scenario, since the research portrays the hegemony of uniprofessional models of health education. For example, a study in a Brazilian

university on the availability of interprofessional education in health graduation concluded that curricula are mostly uniprofessional and interprofessional education is restricted to extracurricular activities and in the university extension modality. These results reiterate the need for curricular changes that incorporate formal interprofessional education and longitudinality in health graduate courses⁽¹³⁾.

It should be emphasized that, in the university that hosted this research, health courses are organized in their own physical structures, each in its own institute, with its human and material resources, which can hinder the interaction between professions. In fact, if the training process is centralized in a single profession and mostly content-oriented, strategies for the formation of attitudes, skills and values based on collaboration and teamwork are hampered. Therefore, it is possible to infer that these factors, influenced by the university management model, centralized and productivist, weaken the collaborative and interprofessional pedagogical processes, imposing limits on integral care^(19,20).

This may be related to the fact that Political-Pedagogical Projects often favor a multiprofessional work approach. This approach is reflected in the segmented organization of knowledge and practices in the various teaching spaces, through a hospital-centric and fragmented model. This model results in little integration between the different courses and is aimed at training professionals capable of acting in isolation in their respective areas of specialization⁽²¹⁾.

Although the projects analyzed in this study propose, for example, the execution of multidisciplinary events together with other students, it is observed that there is little detail that points to changes in conceptions, aimed at greater integration between courses and therefore, interprofessionality, especially when considering that the idea of multiprofessionality prevails in all Political-pedagogical Projects that composed the corpus, even those implemented more recently. Thus, it is understood that the conceptions of multidisciplinary observed in the documents are not consistent with the perspective of interprofessional work and this is a recurring issue in the literature, which points to the imprecision in the use of the terms⁽⁶⁾.

The key elements that constitute teamwork and

its variations: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary or multiprofessional and interprofessional are sometimes used as synonyms. It is known that the prefixes multi, inter and trans respectively denote an increasing degree of interaction, integration and coordination of disciplines or professions, whereas the terms disciplinary or professional refer to, in this order, the scope of knowledge or disciplines and professional practices^(6, 22).

The analysis of the Political-pedagogical Projects allows inferring that the conceptions that aim at the interprofessional education present as an appendicular need of the formation, but do not appear expressed in a project, plan or goal, indicating few advances in overcoming the uniprofessional models. It is not possible to lose sight of that several factors contribute to this, highlighting the historical and cultural material requirements that determine the formation of individuals in modern society and, with their forms of social organization, impose various restrictions on educational institutions⁽²³⁻²⁵⁾.

It is understood that the transformations in educational models necessarily pass through the operationalization of new teaching strategies, even because the methods of teaching and learning that are problematizing, contextualized with professional practice and that encourage interaction between different professional areas are fundamental to enhance the development of collaborative skills^(26,27). Although interprofessional learning can occur informally, it is undeniable that it is most effective when it is carefully planned, promoted and rigorously evaluated. The development of interprofessional projects demands more than just bringing together different professions or sharing the same space for teaching, requiring strategic planning and deep integration between the areas involved⁽²⁸⁾.

A limit of this work concerns the fact that many

of the pedagogical projects have been in force for more than 10 years. Therefore, the analysis presented can portray conceptions in continuous transformation, since the processes of adaptation of training at the University are also always dynamic. Furthermore, the documentary analysis did not include teaching programs or other data collection techniques such as interviews with key informants, which should be considered in the evaluation of the results presented.

The contributions of this research offer opportunities for future investigations that may rethink the curricula of health professions regarding interprofessional education, promoting the development of assertive strategies and methodologies to achieve the necessary changes.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This study identified that interprofessional education is incipient and that there are few advances in the strategies formally planned in the curricula of health graduate courses at the university in question. Thus, there is a need for greater investment in institutional policies that promote integration and interprofessionality, in line with contemporary health and education policies.

In the same direction, it was observed that there is no provision for curricular disciplines that, with intentionality and explicit objectives, promote the integration of the various students of health courses, with a common goal, although there are attempts to approach - based on a multiprofessional work concept. In view of these findings, further studies are necessary to understand the obstacles to the implementation of interprofessional education at this university and others of similar size, from the perspective of the own professors involved, of the health students and managers of the strategy and tactical sphere in the university space.

ANÁLISE DOS PROJETOS POLÍTICO-PEDAGÓGICOS DE CURSOS DA SAÚDE SOBRE EDUCAÇÃO INTERPROFISSIONAL EM UMA UNIVERSIDADE PÚBLICA

RESUMO

Objetivo: analisar as concepções e estratégias de educação interprofissional presentes nos Projetos Político-pedagógicos dos cursos de graduação na área de saúde de uma universidade pública federal. **Método:** pesquisa descritiva e documental, com abordagem qualitativa, realizada com os projetos político-pedagógicos dos cursos de biomedicina, enfermagem, farmácia, fisioterapia, medicina, nutrição e odontologia desta Universidade. A coleta de dados ocorreu no período de novembro a dezembro de 2022. Para a organização e análise dos dados, utilizou-se a Análise de Conteúdo, na modalidade temática. **Resultados:** obtiveram-se duas categorias e uma subcategoria, intituladas, respectivamente: "Concepções que visam à interdisciplinaridade"; "O trabalho

multiprofissional na linha, porém uniprofissional nas entrelinhas”, e “Poucos avanços nas concepções e estratégias de educação interprofissional”. Observou-se que as estratégias que visam à educação interprofissional são escassas e que a estrutura dos projetos e dos currículos é predominantemente uniprofissional. **Considerações finais:** a educação interprofissional no cenário estudado é incipiente e há poucos avanços nas estratégias formalmente previstas nos currículos, embora existam tentativas de aproximação, a partir de uma concepção de trabalho multidisciplinar.

Palavras-chave: Educação interprofissional. Currículo. Estratégias de saúde. Política de educação superior. Universidades.

ANÁLISIS DE LOS PROYECTOS POLÍTICO-PEDAGÓGICOS DE CURSOS DE SALUD SOBRE EDUCACIÓN INTERPROFESIONAL EN UNA UNIVERSIDAD PÚBLICA

RESUMEN

Objetivo: analizar las concepciones y estrategias de educación interprofesional presentes en los Proyectos Político-pedagógicos de los cursos de grado en el área de salud de una universidad pública federal. **Método:** investigación descriptiva y documental, con enfoque cualitativo, realizada con los proyectos político-pedagógicos de los cursos de biomedicina, enfermería, farmacia, fisioterapia, medicina, nutrición y odontología de esta Universidad. La recolección de datos se llevó a cabo en el período de noviembre a diciembre de 2022. Para la organización y el análisis de los datos, se utilizó el Análisis de Contenido, en modalidad temática. **Resultados:** se obtuvieron dos categorías y una subcategoría, tituladas respectivamente: "Concepciones destinadas a la interdisciplinariedad"; "El trabajo multiprofesional en la línea, pero uniprofesional entre líneas", y "Pocos avances en las concepciones y estrategias de educación interprofesional". Se observó que las estrategias destinadas a la educación interprofesional son escasas y que la estructura de los proyectos y de los currículos es predominantemente uniprofesional. **Consideraciones finales:** la educación interprofesional en el escenario estudiado es incipiente y hay pocos avances en las estrategias formalmente previstas en los currículos, aunque existen intentos de aproximación, a partir de una concepción de trabajo multidisciplinario.

Palabras clave: Educación interprofesional. Currículo. Estrategias de salud. Política de educación superior. Universidades.

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