

THE RELIGIOUS DIRECTORS OF THE WENCESLAU BRAZ NURSING SCHOOL (1955-2016)

AS DIRETORAS RELIGIOSAS DA ESCOLA DE ENFERMAGEM WENCESLAU BRAZ (1955-2016)

LAS DIRECTORAS RELIGIOSAS DE LA ESCUELA DE ENFERMERÍA WENCESLAU BRAZ (1955-2016)

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: the Wenceslau Braz Nursing School (*Escola de Enfermagem Wenceslau Braz* - EEWB), created in 1954 and located in Itajubá - MG, is a private Catholic confessional teaching institution, owned and maintained by the congregation of the Sisters of Providence of Gap (*Irmãs da Providência de Gap* - IPGap). **Objective:** describe the individual path and analyze the administrative trajectory of the religious directors of EEWB, from 1955 to 2016. **Method:** qualitative research with a historical approach. Data were obtained from documentary, bibliographic and interview sources. Michel Foucault's thought was the reference used in the construction of the study. **Results:** in this historical context, EEWB had nine religious directors - seven nurses and two educators. All were teachers at the school. The directors' biography reveals the knowledge, work, skills and competences of each one, the pioneering spirit in the implementation of professional Nursing in the south of Minas Gerais and the administrative role that drives the progress of the School. **Conclusion:** the religious directors of EEWB left a cultural and scientific legacy for Brazilian Nursing, materialized in the school itself and in the professional profile of the graduates. The legacy left is the love of education and Nursing, as this love made them believe in the dream and make every effort to guarantee the continuity of the school, which required adding strengths, knowledge and powers.

Keywords: Nursing; Nursing Research; History of Nursing; Schools, Nursing; Organization and Administration.

RESUMO

Introdução: a Escola de Enfermagem Wenceslau Braz (EEWB), criada em 1954 e situada em Itajubá - MG, é uma instituição de ensino privada, confessional católica, pertencente e mantida pela congregação das Irmãs da Providência de Gap. **Objetivo:** descrever o percurso individual e analisar a trajetória administrativa das diretoras religiosas da EEWB, no período de 1955 a 2016. **Método:** pesquisa qualitativa de abordagem histórica. Os dados foram obtidos de fontes documentais, bibliográficas e entrevistas. O pensamento de Michel Foucault foi o referencial utilizado na construção do estudo. **Resultados:** neste recorte histórico, a EEWB teve nove diretoras religiosas - sete enfermeiras e duas educadoras. Todas foram professoras da escola. A biografia das diretoras revela o conhecimento, trabalho, habilidade e competência de cada uma, o pioneirismo na implantação da enfermagem profissional no sul de Minas e o protagonismo administrativo impulsionador do progresso da Escola. **Conclusão:** as diretoras religiosas da EEWB deixaram um legado cultural e científico para a Enfermagem brasileira, materializado na própria escola e no perfil profissional dos egressos. A herança deixada é o amor à educação e à Enfermagem, pois esse amor as fez acreditar no sonho e envidar todos os esforços para garantir a continuidade da escola, o que demandou somar forças, saberes e poderes.

Palavras-chave: Enfermagem; Pesquisa em Enfermagem; História da Enfermagem; Escolas de Enfermagem; Organização e Administração.

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RESUMEN

Introducción: la Escuela de Enfermería Wenceslau Braz (EEWB), fundada en 1954 en Itajubá - MG, es una institución de enseñanza privada católica que pertenece a la Congregación de Hermanas de la Providencia de Gap. **Objetivo:** describir el camino individual y analizar la trayectoria administrativa de los directores religiosos de EEWB, de 1955 a 2016. **Método:** investigación cualitativa con enfoque histórico. Los datos se obtuvieron de fuentes documentales, bibliográficas y de entrevistas. El pensamiento de Michel Foucault fue la referencia utilizada en la construcción del estudio. **Resultados:** en este contexto histórico, EEWB tuvo nueve directoras religiosas: siete enfermeras y dos educadoras. Todas eran profesoras de la escuela. La biografía de las directoras revela el conocimiento, el trabajo, las habilidades y las competencias de cada una, el espíritu pionero en la implementación de la enfermería profesional en el sur de Minas Gerais y el papel administrativo que impulsa el progreso de la escuela. **Conclusión:** las directoras religiosas de EEWB dejaron un legado cultural y científico para la Enfermería brasileña, materializado en la propia escuela y en el perfil profesional de los graduados. El legado que dejan es el amor por la educación y la enfermería, ya que este amor las hizo creer en el sueño y hacer todo lo posible para garantizar la continuidad de la escuela, lo cual requería agregar fortalezas, conocimientos y poderes.

Palabras clave: Enfermería; Investigación en Enfermería; Historia de la Enfermería; Facultades de Enfermería; Organización y Administración.

INTRODUCTION

The Brazilian Nursing historiography shows that the Wenceslau Braz Nursing School (*Escola de Enfermagem Wenceslau Braz* - EEWB) is the first Nursing teaching unit in the south of Minas Gerais State. Created in 1954 and in functioning since 1955, more than 2,000 nurses, 400 Nursing assistants and technicians and 500 specialists have graduated. Of this historical past, only the generic context is known. There is a historiographical void related to administrative management and the work of religious directors, all belonging to the congregation of the Sisters of Providence of Gap (*Irmãs da Providência de Gap* - IPGap), an institution that owns and maintains EEWB.¹⁻⁶

Some aspects of EEWB's vitality have been published, however, to date, no study has analyzed the life and work of the directors and their relationship with the school's historical trajectory. The perception of this void as a research problem motivated the realization of this study, which was conducted by the following guiding questions: who were the directors, what knowledge did they have and what legacy did they leave? What are the highlights and breaks of each administrative management? What strategies have been undertaken and what relationships have been established to ensure the continuity of the school?¹⁻⁶

It is relevant to rescue, literally, the work activities of the religious directors of EEWB, in view of the contribution

to Nursing in Minas Gerais and Brazil. It is noteworthy on the national scene the long tradition of Nursing education and the pioneering historical-social role of implantation, expansion and development of the profession in the south of Minas Gerais. Therefore, the study aims to contribute to the enrichment of the bank of memory and history of Minas Gerais and Brazilian Nursing, adding knowledge to the other studies on the trajectory of schools, the life history and contributions of pioneer nurses.⁷⁻¹²

The research aimed to describe the individual trajectory and analyze the administrative trajectory of the religious directors of EEWB, from 1955 to 2016. The initial milestone corresponds to the beginning of teaching activities and the end of the year that precedes the name change to Wenceslau Braz Faculty (*Faculdade Wenceslau Braz* - FWB). As the research reports the facts and events that occurred before the nomenclature change, in this research the old name was kept.

METHOD

Qualitative, historical, biographical, documentary and bibliographic research conducted in 2018, in Itajubá - MG, after approval by the Research Ethics Committee of FWB - CAAE 94879618.8.0000.5099 and Opinion Report Nr. 2,848,754.

Following the method of historical Nursing research, data were collected from primary and secondary sources belonging to the personal collection of the researchers, the FWB and libraries in Itajubá and São Paulo. An interview was conducted with three religious directors, using a form with structured questions.^{13,14}

After a meticulous reading of the sources, the relevant information was selected. The facts were confronted when they presented divergent information. The line of thinking of Michel Foucault guided the analysis and interpretation of the data, due to the possibility of understanding power relations and knowing and understanding the fight strategies used in the consolidation and development of EEWB. The third stage of the method consisted in the elaboration of the historical narrative, presentation of the facts, interpretation and conclusion of the research.¹³⁻¹⁶

RESULTS

EEWB was under the direction of nine religious directors, from 1955 to 2016. Professional training in Nursing was not a *sine qua non* for the position.

Below are excerpts from the biography and professional career of these directors and the highlights of their administrative management at school.

SISTER ZENAIDE NOGUEIRA LEITE

She was born in 1914, in *Itajubá* - MG. Nurse graduated from the School of Nursing Luiza de Marillac, class 1944. She attended the postgraduate course in Pedagogy and Didactics Applied to Nursing, at the *São Paulo* School of Nursing, University of *São Paulo* (*Escola de Enfermagem da Universidade de São Paulo* - EEUSP), in 1960, with a scholarship by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (*Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior* - CAPES). She was the idealizer and first director of EEWB. She worked at the school from 1954 to 1975. She died in 2007.^{2,5}

In preparation for the position of director, she completed the course of Organization and Administration of the School of Nursing, at the Nursing School Anna Nery (*Escola de Enfermagem Anna Nery* - EEAN), at the *Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro* - UFRJ. She created the undergraduate Nursing course at EEWB along the lines of EEAN, adopting rituals, traditions and symbols. And she was responsible for building the professional identity of Nursing from *Itajubá*.^{1,3}

Her administration (1955-1963) was marked by the regularization of the candidate selection process, the beginning of research and publication of articles by the students, the holding of Nursing Week and the publication of articles in newspapers and magazines in the region, publicizing this very important date of the Brazilian Nursing calendar.^{2,5}

The culmination of her administration was the graduation ceremony of the first class, which took place in 1958. In 1959, she implemented the Graduate Follow-up Program, an unprecedented event at the time, with the aim of aiding and exchanging information with former students. The program was presented in the Pedagogy and Didactics Course Applied to Nursing at EEUSP and published in the *Revista Brasileira de Enfermagem* (REBEn). This publication, of great historical value, is the first contribution by EEWB professors to the Brazilian Nursing bibliography.^{2,4,5}

In 1960, she opened the school's own headquarters. And she promoted a significant break in the EEWB by accepting the enrollment of the first male student. This fact reconfigured the profile of the students and the school, making it a mixed institution. In 1963, she implemented the Nursing Assistant course.²

As first director, Sister Zenaide was committed to developing the concept of the school and creating the

administrative mentality that has guided the paths of EEWB since its creation. In recognition of her work, one of the school's annexes bears her name - the Nursing Service Center (*Centro de Assistência de Enfermagem* - CAENF).⁴

SISTER MARIA LEONOR REZENDE TIBÚRCIO

She was born in *Passa Quatro* - MG, in 1931. Graduated nurse and specialist in Obstetric Nursing, from EEAN. Her performance at EEWB was brief. She left the congregation in 1971 and since then there has been no news about her life.²

Her administration (1964-1965) took place at a unique moment in Brazilian history, in the context of changing the country's government model. Despite the weaknesses and uncertainties experienced at that historic moment, the school maintained its activities normally, due to the respectful relationship maintained with the current political leaders. Under the assistance and direct guidance of the director and teachers, there were no excesses or subversions in the internal environment of EEWB.²

She worked to bring the school closer to the community, offering short courses for the mothers' club, teachers in the rural area and students from the municipal school system. Implemented case studies, providing students with direct contact with the population's health problems. She put into practice the Best Student Award Project, as a strategy to increase the rate of achievement in the subjects.²

In 1965, she conducted research on the school's historical roots and published the article in REBEn. This historically significant article is the starting point for research on the history of EEWB.²

SISTER MARIA APARECIDA PINTO

She was born in *Itajubá* - MG, in 1925. Nurse by EEAN and with a postgraduate degree in Pedagogy and Didactics applied to Nursing and Hospital Administration, by EEUSP. At EEWB she was a teacher, responsible for the boarding school, a paronym of the 1967 class and a director. At the end of her term of office, she was transferred to IPGap in *São Paulo*. She passed away in 2002.

With a strong personality, she conducted her administration (1966-1969) with firmness and security. She encouraged students to develop bibliographic research and participate in competitions. Some students won the 1st Prize in the Nursing Week Contest, in 1966, 1967 and 1968, promoted by Brazilian Nursing Association (*Associação Brasileira de Enfermagem* - ABEn), and had their articles published in REBEn's Student Page Section. She closely

followed the work of the Academic Directory in the integration of school students in the extracurricular Nursing internship at the Rondon Project.¹⁸

SISTER TEREZINHA DO CARMO SILVA

She was born in *Piquete* - SP, in 1931. Nurse by EEWB, class 1968. As a student, she published an article on the REBEn Student Page. She attended a master's degree at EEAN, with a CAPES scholarship, under the guidance of Dra. Elvira de Felice Souza, completing the course in 1979. At *Santa Casa de Misericórdia* in *Itajubá*, she helped found the Psychiatry Unit. She was a teacher at EEWB (1973-1983) and a paranymp of the 1979 class. She is currently retired and residing at the Provincial House, in *Itajubá*.^{17,18}

She was the first former student to hold the position of director. Her administration (1970-1973) was marked by the participation of students in the exercise of health education and Nursing care in needy communities and municipal daycare centers, attendance at events and vaccination campaigns. She also implemented changes in the profile of teachers from the hiring of the first secular (non-religious) nurses. As a result of the University Reform of 1968, she extinguished the school boarding school.¹⁸

SISTER MARIA DO CARMO COSTA

She was born in *Pouso Alegre* - MG, in 1938. In the congregation she adopted the religious name of Sister Maria Luiza de Marillac. Nurse by EEWB, class 1961. As a student she published an article in REBEn. She studied Pedagogy and Didactics Applied to Nursing, at EEAN. She implemented the Course Completion Work (*Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso*, TCC) at school. In 1982, she created a study group at *Santa Casa de Itajubá*, favoring teaching-assistance integration. At EEWB she was a director for two terms and a teacher for a short time. She passed away in 2005.^{19,20}

In her first term (1974-1975) she signed an agreement with the Teaching and Research Foundation of *Itajubá* (FEPI) for the realization of the licentiate degree course in Nursing. The number of places for the entrance exam increased. She promoted several events at the school, such as the 1st Seminar on the Sociological Problem of *Itajubá*.¹⁹

The culmination of her second term (1992-1997) was the holding of the Philosophy Seminar of the EEWB and the Ethos of Nursing, which consisted of studying theories and philosophy of Nursing and reviewing the conceptual framework of the School. From this Seminar emerged the Political Pedagogical Project of EEWB. She idealized and created, in 1991, the Institute of Education for Integral Health (*Instituto de Educação para a*

Saúde Integral - IESAI) - an annex of the school destined to teaching, treatment and research using natural resources. She was the first director of IESAI. She implanted the Skin Injury Clinic and launched EEWB Notebooks, publishing the research developed by the school's undergraduate and graduate students.^{19,20}

MOTHER MARIE ANGE

Maria Alice Bernard Robbe was born 1907, in *Petrópolis* - RJ. She was an elementary school teacher at the *Escola Normal de Petrópolis*. Upon joining the congregation, she adopted the religious name of Sister Marie Ange, later Mother Marie Ange. She worked at EEWB from 1955 until 1989, holding several positions on the board and acting as a teacher and counselor. She passed away in 1994.^{18,19}

In 1955, she organized the School's initial documentation for accreditation and recognition at the Ministry of Education (BR), (*Ministério da Educação* - MEC). She is considered the founder of EEWB. She was a paranymp of the 1959 class. She was self-taught in Nursing History, Ethics and Legislation.^{18,19}

In the early days of EEWB, she committed on the divulgation of the school and the Nursing profession by publishing articles in local and regional newspapers. She bought and restored books to assemble the library's initial collection. She worked in raising financial resources for the construction of the school's own headquarters. She created the Academic Directory, provided its affiliation with the National Students Union and monitored the work of the boards so that nothing was missing and avoiding excesses and transgressions.^{2-4,18,19,21}

She maintained a close friendship with the board of ABEn - *Minas Gerais* and ABEn - National, including Haydée Guanais Dourado. She actively participated in the Philosophy Seminar of EEWB and Ethos of Nursing and signed the document produced there - the *Magna Carta* of the School. She dedicated most of her life to the School. She was critical and whenever she could she expressed her indignation at the reality of the difficulties experienced by private schools, subordinate to religious institutions and with little autonomy.^{18,20,21}

Mother Marie Ange was the first religious educator to assume the role of director of EEWB. Her administration (1976-1982) was marked by the implementation of the first qualifications and specialization courses; introduction of Nursing textbooks, replacing handouts made in mimeograph; and holding of the III Nursing Journey of *Minas Gerais*. Due to the numerical deficiency of teachers, the TCC was extinguished. In recognition of her work, the FWB library and auditorium bear her name.

SISTER EMILIANA SANCHES COELHO

Maria Aparecida Sanches Coelho was born in 1923, in *Monte Santo* - MG. She became a Bachelor of Letters at the Pontifical Catholic University, *Rio de Janeiro*. She studied a master's degree in Modern Letters at the University of Lion, France, and a doctorate in French Language and Literature, at USP. She dedicated her life to tertiary education in educational institutions in *Itajubá*. At the Federal University of *Itajubá* (*Universidade Federal de Itajubá* - UNIFEI) she reached the rank of Full Professor. She published scientific articles in journals. She was State Secretary of Education and Member of the State Council of Education of *Minas Gerais*. She was President of the School Maintainer. She was a professor at EEWB only in 1975. She died in 2017.¹⁹

Sister Emiliana was the second religious educator to take charge of the school. Her administration (1983-1986) was marked by the creation of ABEn-District of *Itajubá*. She held, in partnership with ABEn - District of *Itajubá*, the IX Nursing Journey of *Minas Gerais*. In the opening speech of that event, the then president of ABEn - MG, Dulce de Castro Mendes, praised the school's work in publicizing and promoting the development of Nursing in the region.²²

SISTER MARIA MARLY SIMÕES

She was born in *Itajubá* - MG, in 1945. Nurse by EEWB, class 1970. She attended the Licentiate course at FEPI. Studied the master's degree in Fundamentals of Nursing at EEUSP, Class 1979, with Dr^a. Wanda de Aguiar Horta as supervisor. She has been at the School since 1967, having served as a teacher and held several positions. She was coordinator of the EEWB Research Ethics Committee. She represented the School in the Nursing Development Program (*Programa de Desenvolvimento da Enfermagem* - PRODEN) and was a member of the Editorial Board of *Revista Mineira de Enfermagem* (REME), between 1997 and 2013. At IESAI she was responsible for courses and Nursing assistance and published articles on the use of complementary therapies. She currently holds the position of President of the Maintainer, technical officer at the *Conselho Regional de Minas Gerais* (COREN-MG) and pedagogical coordinator of the undergraduate Nursing course at FWB.²³

From her short term (2007), the return of Nursing monitoring and the participation of teachers in radio programs stands out.²³

SISTER LUCYLA JUNQUEIRA CARNEIRO

She was born in 1935, in the city of *Cristina* - MG. Nurse by EEWB, class 1973. She participated in the intensive course of Business Administration at the Faculty of Economic Sciences

of the South of *Minas Gerais* and of Specialization in Family Health for Nurses, at EEWB. She has been at school since 1966, having held the positions of secretary, teacher and director. She is the creator of ABEn - District of *Itajubá*. Currently, she is Director Emeritus of FWB.²⁴

In her first term (1987-1991) she provided a school room for the COREN-MG representative in *Itajubá* to develop his work. She also did so with ABEn - *Itajubá*, which now has a defined headquarters. She collaborated with the Federal Nursing Council (COFEN), being responsible for the regional execution of the data collection of the research project on Nursing Practice in Brazil. In 1990, she created new specialization courses and in 1991 she joined EEWB in the Network of Nursing Schools of *Minas Gerais* participating in PRODEN.²⁴

In her second term (1998-2006) she reformed and expanded the school. She implemented the Self-assessment Committee and new specialization courses. The experience of the Family Health for Nurses course, using the same conceptual model from the University of Calgary, Canada, gave rise to the article published by her in REBEn.^{6,24}

She obtained approval from the School Research Ethics Committee. She signed an agreement with the School of Nursing of the Federal University of *Minas Gerais* and brought the Decentralized Master to the south of *Minas Gerais*, benefiting the EEWB and the Nursing Faculties of *Pouso Alegre* and *Alfenas*. She participated in the REME Administrative Council between July 1998 and December 2003. She created the Alumni Association and held the festivities of the school's 50th anniversary.²⁴

In the third term (2008-2009) she implemented the Ombudsman service, the Academic Nursing Leagues and supported the projects of the Academic Directory. She organized all the material that gave rise to the film on the historical trajectory of EEWB.²⁴

In the fourth term (2012-2016) she received the visit of the General Secretary and Vice-President of ABEn - National for the 2010-2013 term, respectively, Nurse Msc. Simone Aparecida Peruzzo and Nurse Msc. Helga Regina Bresciani, during the Nursing Week celebrations. In their speeches, both praised the good relationship and fruitful partnership between the school and ABEn - *Itajubá*. She inaugurated the Center for Assistance to Women and increased the number of grants from the Scientific Initiation Program. In 2015, she held an event to celebrate the 60th anniversary of EEWB.²⁴

DISCUSSION

From the biography of the directors of EEWB some evidence emerge. All of them had professional training in basic education (normal teachers) and worked as a schoolteacher.

Seven were nurses and had postgraduate courses, some of which were CAPES scholars. Four are former students of EEWB. Two nurses have the title of master and one educator obtained the title of doctor. Only Mother Marie Ange has no higher education. Eight of them published articles in scientific journals. These data show the pioneering spirit of these women, religious and educators.

Analyzing the biography of these directors, something draws attention. For veiled reasons, the IPGap congregation removed six ex-directors (five nurses and an educator) from the EEWB, all highly qualified to carry out Nursing administration, education and research. The different knowledge they had must have bothered the leadership of the IPGap congregation, in the person of their representative at the school.

For the removed directors, their permanence in the school was extremely short. In contrast, three former directors (two nurses and an educator) were kept for a long time. This shows that within the EEWB there are power relations that exceed the knowledge. And in the process of choosing and staying at school, knowledge, management skills and the potential for promoting changes that each religious possessed did not always prevail.^{15,16}

All administrative experience and professional skill/knowledge of removed religious women were neglected. These professionals obviously wanted and could have done much more for the development of the School and Nursing of *Itajubá*, but they were stopped.

According to Foucault, in the midst of power relations there is a relationship of submission, obedience and punishment. The former removed directors were aware of the adversities present behind the scenes of the school and of their duty of submission in relation to the orders of the Superior of the congregation. In view of the vow of obedience made when they entered the religious life, some submitted and accepted the designation for other activities related to religious service.^{15,16}

This is corroborated in the speech of one of them:

When I came back from the master's degree, I didn't stay at school anymore - with great regret. I loved Nursing a lot. I loved my students too. Religious life is like that. I would go back. I thought it was my place here at school. So, this whole context is how you come and go. You don't stay where you want. You are transferred on a mission. So, I lost that direct contact with the school.¹⁸

Foucault teaches that, in the network of power relations, individuals circulate, sometimes as a subject, sometimes as an exercise of power. And as a strategy of struggle to break with submission, they use resistances to power. A situation at EEWB illustrates this condition. Faced with the attempt to control

the conduct of one of the removed religious directors, she showed resistance to subjection. And the desire to control her own thoughts and actions led her to decide to permanently disconnect from religious life.^{15,16}

Disruptions, discontinuities, conflicts of interest and forced terminations are not exclusive to EEWB. Studies on the biography of pioneer nurses and the history of the first Brazilian Nursing schools reveal similar situations. What draws attention in the present study, however, is that the administrative management of EEWB was exclusive to religious women - which denotes its differential.⁷⁻¹²

When looking at the administrative management of EEWB, it is possible to observe the existence of a network of relations of knowledge and power established with the society from *Itajubá* and the public authorities, whose positivity has significantly contributed to the consolidation and progress of the institutional body called Wenceslau Braz Nursing School. This is in line with Foucault's thinking when he states that the history of human relations is marked by a network of relations of knowledge and by the mechanisms of power that produce positives.^{15,16}

In the identified network, of significant importance and effectiveness, the empowerment of the directors stands out when they take on themselves the power to administer and manage school life well. To do so, they used different types of knowledge (historical, ethical, legal, administrative, economic, political, didactic and pedagogical) that were acquired in courses, readings, technical visits, skills developed in their daily work, exchange of knowledge between them, with professionals from other educational institutions and Nursing leaders from *Minas Gerais* and Brazil.^{15,16,26}

But not everything was easy for these directors. The first faced social prejudice in relation to the profession, reduced number of candidates for the course, lack of financial resources and own headquarters. The directors of the 1960s and 1970s had problems in hiring qualified nurse professors and restructuring the course, as a result of the University Reform of 1968. In the 1980s and 1990s, the problems faced were in relation to the high default rate. Since 2000, the school has suffered from competition, due to the creation of new Nursing courses in the south of *Minas Gerais* and, recently, the approval by the MEC of courses in the form of distance learning (*Ensino a Distância*, EaD) in Nursing.

The directors used several strategies to face the problems mentioned, such as marketing of the profession, of the Nursing course, encouraging students to participate in events, develop research and publish articles. To guarantee the continuity of the course, they interacted with society, maintained contacts with politicians, affiliated the school to associations defending educational institutions and maintained partnerships with

development agencies, health institutions and Brazilian Nursing class entities. To reduce defaults, they facilitated educational financing and offered scholarships. To increase the quality of the course, they incorporated technological innovations, kept the library collection up to date and invested in the qualification of religious nurses, sending them to postgraduate courses in *Rio de Janeiro* and *São Paulo*. In short, they aligned their management to public teaching policies, curricular guidelines and requirements established by MEC.^{15,16}

The congregation of the Sisters of Providence of Gap has been dedicated to the education of children, young people and adults in the south of *Minas Gerais* for over 100 years, and owns primary, secondary and higher education institutions. The fact that the people of *Minas Gerais* value the religiosity and the teaching method of Catholic schools facilitated the process of consolidating the teaching of Nursing at EEWB and the maintenance of religious women in the direction of the school, during the studied period.

CONCLUSION

The religious directors of EEWB were protagonists of events of historical interest for Nursing from *Itajubá*, from *Minas Gerais* and Brazil, which needed to be documented in order to become known and remembered. That is why the life and work history of each of these women was taken as an object of study in this research.

When visiting the memory and recording the history of the religious directors of EEWB, it was noticed that these women were the soul of the school, because the institution's progress depended on the knowledge, effort, work, skill and managerial competence of each one. The empowerment and administrative role of these directors ensured the continuity of the school and its projection in the Nursing scenario in *Minas Gerais* and Brazil.²⁶

These directors, nurses and educators left an immense cultural and scientific legacy for Brazilian Nursing, materialized in the EEWB itself and in the professional profile of the graduates. The legacy left is the love of education and Nursing, as this love made them believe in the dream and make every effort to make the school a reality, which required adding strengths, knowledge and powers. For their dedication and commitment to the Nursing profession and teaching, the religious nurses directors of EEWB deserve to be recognized as icons, personalities in the history of Nursing from *Itajubá* and southern *Minas Gerais*.

The challenges that lie ahead for the future administrative management of the FWB will require from the new directors, religious or secular, to know their past history, in order to

maintain the status, achieved by school. For this, this study has a lot to contribute.

Due to the number of documents on the EEWB, it is recommended to carry out other research to contribute to the expansion of the historical knowledge produced.

The FWB and other pioneer Nursing schools in the country are recommended to compile and digitize their photographic and documentary collection, in order to facilitate the use of these historical sources in future studies, which was a factor that limited the findings in this research.

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