

## A VISÃO DOS ALUNOS NO IMPACTO DAS AÇÕES EXTENSIONISTAS NA FORMAÇÃO DO GRADUANDO DA ÁREA DA SAÚDE

### *OPINIÓN DE LOS ESTUDIANTES SOBRE EL IMPACTO DE LAS ACCIONES DE EXTENSIÓN EN LA GRADUACIÓN DEL ÁREA DE SALUD*

### *STUDENTS' VIEW ON THE IMPACT OF EXTENSION ACTIONS ON THE FORMATION OF UNDERGRADUATES IN THE HEALTH FIELD*

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**RESUMO:** A Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da educação (LDB) incorporou aos estatutos e regimentos das Instituições de ensino superior o princípio de indissociabilidade entre ensino, pesquisa e extensão, legislada pela Constituição de 1988. Considerada um dos pilares do ensino superior, a extensão desempenha um papel relevante na formação de profissionais. Contudo, são escassos os trabalhos que quantifiquem o impacto das atividades de extensão no processo de desenvolvimento na formação. Objetivou-se quantificar e identificar o impacto das ações extensionistas na formação profissional dos graduandos dos cursos da área de saúde. Método: pesquisa de campo exploratória, retrospectiva e quantitativa. Alunos dos últimos semestres de diversos cursos da área da saúde que realizaram atividades extensionistas responderam questionários referentes ao aproveitamento bem como desempenho acadêmico (com domínios de habilidade, conhecimento, atitudes, valores e aspectos éticos). Além disso, também foram avaliadas as contribuições da extensão no processo de formação como pessoa e profissional. O grupo foi composto principalmente por jovens, que exerciam atividade remunerada, e do gênero feminino. Certificou-se que grande parte dos alunos reportou melhora no aproveitamento acadêmico. Constatou-se que em todos os domínios, as notas médias atribuídas pelo grupo que reportou melhora foram significativamente maiores em relação ao grupo que relatou melhora do rendimento acadêmico. Alunos extensionistas mencionaram que as ações contribuíram no desenvolvimento do relacionamento com a equipe e com o público; bem como na capacitação para identificação das necessidades individuais e coletivas; e conscientização e reflexão sobre o papel individual na transformação social. Constatou-se que o programa de extensão impactou positivamente no aproveitamento acadêmico dos estudantes extensionistas, evidenciadas pela afirmação na melhora do rendimento acadêmico, nas notas médias altas atribuídas pelos alunos nos questionamentos quantitativos dos diversos domínios e na descrição da percepção positiva dos alunos sobre as contribuições efetivas no seu processo e percurso formativo como pessoa e profissional.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Ensino superior. Extensão universitária. Desempenho acadêmico.

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**RESUMEN:** La Ley de Pautas y Bases de la Educación (LDB) incorporó a los estatutos y reglamentos de las instituciones de educación superior el principio de inseparabilidad entre la enseñanza, la investigación y la extensión, legislado por la Constitución de 1988. Considerado uno de los pilares de la educación superior, la extensión juega un papel relevante en la formación de profesionales. Sin embargo, hay poco trabajo para cuantificar el impacto de las actividades de extensión en el proceso de desarrollo de la capacitación. Cuantificar e identificar el impacto de las acciones de extensión en la formación profesional de los cursos de pregrado en salud. Método: investigación de campo exploratoria, retrospectiva y cuantitativa. Los estudiantes de los últimos semestres de varios cursos de salud que realizaron actividades de extensión respondieron cuestionarios sobre logros y rendimiento académico (con dominios de habilidades, conocimientos, actitudes, valores y aspectos éticos). Además, también se evaluaron las contribuciones de extensión en el proceso de capacitación como persona y profesional. El grupo estaba compuesto principalmente por jóvenes, que tenían una actividad remunerada, y mujeres. Se verificó que la mayoría de los estudiantes informaron una mejora en el rendimiento académico. Se encontró que en todos los dominios, los puntajes promedio dados por el grupo que informó mejoría fueron significativamente más altos que el grupo que informó mejoría en el rendimiento académico. Los estudiantes de extensión mencionaron que las acciones contribuyeron al desarrollo de la relación con el equipo y el público; así como capacitación para identificar necesidades individuales y colectivas; y conciencia y reflexión sobre el papel individual en la transformación social. Se encontró que el programa de extensión tuvo un impacto positivo en el rendimiento académico de los estudiantes de extensión, como lo demuestra la afirmación de la mejora en el rendimiento académico, las altas calificaciones promedio otorgadas por los estudiantes en el cuestionamiento cuantitativo de los diversos dominios y la descripción de la percepción positiva de los estudiantes de Las aportaciones efectivas en su proceso y trayectoria formativa como persona y profesional.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Educación superior. Extensión universitaria. Rendimiento académico.

**ABSTRACT:** The Law of Education Guidelines and Bases (LDB) incorporated into the statutes and bylaws of higher education institutions the principle of inseparability between teaching, research and extension, legislated by the 1988 Constitution. Considered one of the pillars of higher education, extension plays a relevant role in the training of professionals. However, there is little work quantifying the impact of extension activities on the development process in training. To quantify and identify the impact of extension actions on the vocational training of undergraduate health courses. Method: exploratory, retrospective and quantitative field research. Students from the last semester of several health courses that performed extension activities answered questionnaires regarding achievement as well as academic performance (including domains of skill, knowledge, attitudes, values and ethical aspects). In addition, the contributions of extension in the training process as a person and professional were also evaluated. The group was mainly composed of young people, who had a job, and women. It was verified that most of the students reported improvement in academic achievement. It was found that in all domains, the average scores given by the group that reported improvement were significantly higher than the group that reported improvement in academic performance. Extension students mentioned that the actions contributed to the development of the relationship with the team and the public; as well as training to identify individual and collective needs; and awareness and reflection on the individual role in social transformation. It was found that the extension program positively impacted the academic achievement of

*extension students, as evidenced by the affirmation of the improvement in academic performance, the high average grades awarded by students in the quantitative questioning of the various domains and the description of students' positive perception of the effective contributions in their process and formative journey as a person and professional.*

**KEYWORDS:** Higher education. University extension. Academic performance.

## Introduction

The structuring of higher education in Brazil was late and since, naturally, universities did not evolve their structures into a structured and articulated formative model, the government did so legally, implementing in 1962 the Law of Education Guidelines and Bases (LDB, Portuguese initials), legislated by the Union since the Constitution of 1934 and reaffirmed in the Constitution of 1988, declaring that “It is up to the Union to legislate on the guidelines and bases of national education” and that “universities enjoy didactic-scientific, administrative and financial and patrimonial management, and will obey the principle of inseparability between teaching, research and extension”.

In the field of higher education, the new LDB enshrined the principles of university autonomy; incorporated the principles of inseparability between teaching, research and extension to the statutes and regulations of Higher Education Institutions; restructured the National Curriculum Guidelines in the curricula of higher education courses, requiring the profile of graduating professional, assuming technical, scientific, generalist, humanist, critical and reflective training, with performance at all levels of health care. In this perspective, University Extension (UE) plays an important role in the training of professionals, in view of being the transforming relationship between the University and Society. The UE is considered one of the pillars of higher education, together with teaching and research, it is part of an educational, interdisciplinary, scientific, cultural and political process, which inextricably links teaching and research, and promotes transformative interaction between University and other sectors of society.

And in the sense of institutionalizing the UE as an academic process defined and carried out according to the requirements of reality, in the formation of the student, in the qualification of the teacher and in the exchange with society, it was elaborated and approved by the Forum of Pro-Rectors of Extension of Universities Brazilian Public Schools (FORPROEX), in 1998, the first National Extension Plan (PNE), which has dialogic interaction as guidelines; interdisciplinarity and interprofessionality; the inseparability of teaching-research-extension;

impact on student education and the impact and social transformation. The qualification of the student's formation, through his involvement in extension activities, depends on a pedagogical project that specifies the objectives of the action and the skills of the professionals involved; the methodology for assessing student participation and the designation of the guiding professor.

There are several studies that conclude that extension actions have a positive impact on student formation. Moura *et al.* (2012), demonstrated the link between universities and societies; knowledge production, reflections on transformations in health promotion, disease control and better way to act collectively. In addition, several authors have pointed out that the extension practice could favor learning, as well as in the production of knowledge and approximation with the population's social reality. Additionally, the UE has the potential to train professionals as a differential, since it contributes to reflect and act critically in the face of social problems that may be involved. However, there are few studies that quantify the impact of extension activities on the process of developing competencies, skills and formative content in the Health student. Most of the studies are focused on qualitative and/or observational analyzes. Therefore, the present work had as objectives, to characterize the profile of the extension student of a private university and to quantify the impact of the participation in extension activities in the academic performance of these students, through free declaration from them and to describe the students' perception about their formative gains tied to extension, focusing on competencies and skills present in the National Curriculum Guidelines.

## Material e methods

The realization of this study was based on an exploratory, quantitative field research, carried out at a private university in São Paulo after approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Santo Amaro University under resolution no. 1,541,971. Sampling was defined by convenience and students from different courses were invited to participate in the study. However, for inclusion criteria, only students who had participated in at least one extension activity were submitted to the research; who were taking the penultimate and last semester of courses in the Health area (Nursing, Medicine, Physiotherapy, Veterinary Medicine, Dentistry, Biomedicine and Pharmacy); students who agreed to participate voluntarily in the research signed the Free and Informed Consent Form (ICF). To avoid any conflicts of interest, students directly linked with the researchers of that work were not included in the analysis. To compose the data collection instrument, a questionnaire on academic performance was developed after

participating in extension activities, with categorical responses being attributed (improvement, worsening, remained, cannot answer); quantification of academic achievement in the domains of I - Knowledge, II - Skills and competences, III - Attitudes, IV - Values and V - Ethical aspects, through responses with numerical values from 0 to 10, being 0 when you disagree completely and 10 when you agree fully; and description of the student about his/her formative gains linked to the extension. Subsequently, the sample was divided into two groups, called the group of students who reported improvement in academic performance (GM) and another group of students who stated that there was no improvement in academic performance (GNM). The results of the groups' comparison variables were submitted to the Student's t test, considering statistically significant differences when  $p < 0.05$ .

## Results

In all, 50 students from various undergraduate courses who practiced the university's extension activities participated. All volunteers were taking the last semesters in their respective courses, the sociodemographic and academic profile of the study participants are shown in table 1.

**Table 1** - Academic and sociodemographic profile of the study participants

<b>Courses</b>	<b>Voluntaries n=50(%)</b>
Biomedicine	9 (18)
Nursing	10 (20)
Pharmacy	4 (8)
Physiotherapy	8 (16)
Medicine	8 (16)
Veterinary Medicine	5 (10)
Dentistry	6 (12)
<b>Semester</b>	
Penultimate	42 (84)
Last	8 (16)
<b>Study Period</b>	
Morning	28 (56)
Night	14 (28)
Integral	8 (16)
<b>Scholarships</b>	
No	19 (38)
Yes	31 (62)
<b>Genre</b>	
Male	7 (14)

Female	43 (86)
<b>Marital status</b>	
Married/Divorced	8 (16)
Single	42 (84)
<b>Performs paid activity</b>	
No	20 (40)
Yes	30 (60)
<b>Work schedule</b>	
Morning	22 (73,4)
Night	6 (20)
Weekends	2 (6,6)

Source: Devised by the authors.

About 52% of academics stated that they participated in internal extension events, 37% participated in local events, 7% in regional events and 4% in other events.

Then, the students' profiles were evaluated in relation to the various knowledge domains. The average response from all students, as well as the questions related to each domain, are shown in table 2.

**Table 2** - Profile of responses from participating students. Average and standard deviation described

No	Domain I - Specific impact on Knowledge	Avg ± DP
Q5.1	The extension activities offered are fundamental to improve the formation of students	8,5 ± 1,9
Q5.2	Participation in extension activities increases interest in subjects	7,9 ± 2,0
Q5.3	It is possible to integrate the theories seen in the classroom with the practice of extension activities	8,9 ± 1,5
Q5.4	The contents covered in the classroom are enhanced with the extension activities	8,4 ± 2,1
Q5.5	The extension activity complements academic formation	8,9 ± 1,4
Q5.6	Extension activities require the generation of new thinking and knowledge	8,7 ± 1,5
Q5.7	Contact with the population leads to more up-to-date knowledge of the topics covered	8,7 ± 1,8
Q5.8	The extension encourages students' ability to create alternative solutions to real problems	9,0 ± 1,3
Q5.9	Extension influences the formation of your technical capacity as part of professional training	8,6 ± 1,8
Q5.10	Extension influences training to deal with the public as part of professional formation	9,4 ± 1,0
<b>Domain II - Specific Impact on Skills and Competencies</b>		8,7 ± 1,3
Q5.11	Extension activity improves the ability to plan processes	8,3 ± 1,9
Q5.12	Extension activities improve the ability to execute techniques and procedures	8,6 ± 1,6
Q5.13	The extension increases the ability to solve problems under pressure in a short time	8,6 ± 1,7
Q5.14	The extension increases the ability to communicate between students and from the students with the public served	8,9 ± 1,5
Q5.15	Extension increases the articulation capacity so that goals are achieved collectively	8,6 ± 1,6
<b>Domain III - Specific impact on Attitudes</b>		8,6 ± 1,4
Q5.16	Extension activities improve the ability to work as a team	8,8 ± 1,6
Q5.17	Extension activities improve the ability to manage emotions so that they do not affect the proposed goals	8,4 ± 1,8
<b>Domain IV - Specific impact on Values</b>		8,6 ± 1,6
Q5.18	Extension activities make students more aware of social needs	9,2 ± 1,3
Q5.19	Extension activities make students more discerning when analyzing information and social data	9,0 ± 1,5
Q5.20	Extension activities increase reflections on the individual role in social transformation	8,8 ± 1,6

Q5.21	After participating in extension activities, there is an increase in the ability to identify the needs of a community	9,0 ± 1,4
		9,0 ± 1,2
<b>Domain V - Specific impact on Ethical Aspects</b>		
Q5.22	Extension activities improved the perception of the needs of individuals	9,2 ± 1,3
Q5.23	Extension allows better balance between individual wills and collective needs	8,9 ± 1,3
		9,1 ± 1,2

Source: Devised by the authors.

It was questioned whether extension activities had an impact on the academic performance of each student. In all, 26 students reported improvement in academic performance (GM), while 24 students reported no improvement in academic performance due to extension activities (GNM).

Among the domains studied, it was observed that among the GM students reported a significant improvement in several domains studied, such as knowledge, attitudes, skills and ethical aspects, however, there was no difference in the analysis of the domain regarding values, as if Follow.

The average grade attributed to the Knowledge domain is significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) in the group of students who reported improvement ( $9.2 \pm 1.1$ ) in academic performance, when compared to the group that declared maintenance of performance ( $8.2 \pm 1.4$ ). Regarding the Skill domain, the group improved with an average score of  $9.2 \pm 1.3$ , significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than the average score of  $7.9 \pm 1.4$  assigned by the group remained.

As for the Attitudes domain, the average score attributed by the group improved ( $9.3 \pm 1.1$ ) was significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) than the group maintained ( $7.8 \pm 1.7$ ).

In the Values domain, the mean attributed by the group improved ( $9.3 \pm 1.0$ ) was significantly higher ( $p < 0.05$ ) compared to the group that remained ( $8.6 \pm 1.3$ ).

And for the Ethical aspects domain, the difference remained significant ( $p < 0.05$ ); higher average score for the group improved ( $9.4 \pm 1.1$ ) compared to the group remained ( $8.6 \pm 1.3$ ).

The comparison between the average grades assigned by students to each of the questions related to the different domains is shown in table 3.

**Table 3** - Difference between students who reported improvement and whether academic performance was maintained in each question addressed in the different domains

Knowledge	Improved (n=26)	Maintained (n=24)	p
Q5.1	9,2 ± 1,2	7,7 ± 2,2	0,01
Q5.2	8,7 ± 1,6	7,0 ± 2,1	0,01
Q5.3	9,2 ± 1,4	8,6 ± 1,7	0,2
Q5.4	8,9 ± 1,9	7,8 ± 2,3	0,1
Q5.5	9,5 ± 1,0	8,4 ± 1,7	0,01

Q5.6	9,2 ± 1,2	8,2 ± 1,7	0,03
Q5.7	9,0 ± 1,6	8,3 ± 2,1	0,2
Q5.8	9,4 ± 1,2	8,6 ± 1,3	0,04
Q5.9	9,3 ± 1,2	7,8 ± 2,0	0,01
Q5.10	9,4 ± 1,1	9,3 ± 1,0	0,6
<b>Skills</b>			
Q5.11	9,2 ± 1,3	7,3 ± 2,1	0,01
Q5.12	9,3 ± 1,1	7,8 ± 1,9	0,01
Q5.13	9,2 ± 1,5	7,8 ± 1,6	0,01
Q5.14	9,3 ± 1,5	8,6 ± 1,5	0,1
Q5.15	9,1 ± 1,4	8,0 ± 1,7	0,02
<b>Attitudes</b>			
Q5.16	9,4 ± 1,0	8,0 ± 1,9	0,01
Q5.17	9,1 ± 1,4	7,6 ± 1,8	0,01
<b>Values</b>			
Q5.18	9,5 ± 1,1	8,8 ± 1,4	0,1
Q5.19	9,2 ± 1,3	8,8 ± 1,7	0,3
Q5.20	9,2 ± 1,1	8,3 ± 1,9	0,1
Q5.21	9,4 ± 1,1	8,7 ± 1,6	0,1
<b>Ethical Aspects</b>			
Q5.22	9,5 ± 1,0	8,8 ± 1,4	0,05
Q5.23	9,4 ± 1,2	8,4 ± 1,3	0,003

Source: Devised by the authors.

On the perception of students in relation to the contributions of extension activities in the formation process as a person and professional: 21% mentioned that the actions contributed to make the student more aware and reflective about the individual role in social transformation; another 21% reported improvement in communication, service and in the relationship with the public served; 20% perceived their progress in the development of the perception and identification of the individual and collective needs of the population; 8% considered the improvement in the application of the content taught in the classroom to the daily work and actions effective; 8% considered improving communication, relationships and teamwork; 7% identified progress in technical capacity building as part of professional formation; 6% to improve and generate knowledge; 4% decision-making training, problem solving in unexpected situations; 4% highlighted the improvement in the execution of techniques and procedures and; only 1% turned to increasing interest in the articles.

Asked about the measures they would adopt when planning actions to link them to the teaching-learning process during graduation: 24% suggested greater dissemination of extension activities at the University, through the experiences of extension workers; 22% insert the extension project as a mandatory activity in the curriculum, or at least, semestral participation or during formation, making a grade in the average; 18% suggested the innovation of specific

activities and dynamics for each course (prevention lectures, interventions aimed at the needs of the population and visits to communities); 13% organization of the calendar of extension activities, with alternative schedules and greater frequency; 7% discussion of theoretical content linked to the extension; 4% attendance to the public in practical subjects; 4% integration between interdisciplinary activities; 4% increase in the workload in the course schedule; 2% selection process to insert students in extension activities and; 2% planning activities for systematization and quality of care.

## Discussion

Our work showed a mainly positive view on the impact of extension actions on the undergraduate education. This was observed in students who described improvement in their academic performance, in general, after extension practices. This is in agreement with several authors.

Other authors highlight the influence and importance of extension practices in health education. Silva *et al.* (2013), reveal the potential extensionist in the health formative process based on three axes: comprehensive health care, dialogical relationship and theoretical and practical relationship; as well as the articulation between teaching and research, focused on technical learning, ethics, social commitment and citizen responsibility. In addition, other authors emphasize that interaction with society is essential for the formation of citizens and, also, the UE encourages the training of professionals who are socially committed to the health and quality of life of people and the community.

There was a significant improvement in the academic performance of the volunteers in their fields. Most of the students stated that during the activities, they integrated knowledge and skill, improved and created new knowledge. Similarly, to this statement, Oliveira (2015), in his study, recognizes that learning takes place in the theoretical and practical relationship and that the UE is the social space for students to exercise reflection on concepts and acts. Corroborating with these data Silva *et al.* (2013), reports that the extension enabled the dynamic formation of experiences as a field of reflective clashes and critical questions in the dialogical confrontations between theory and practice. In addition, Moura *et al.* (2012) described that the extension actions are spaces for reflections and knowledge production, that the contact with the reality of the population makes the student act collectively to cause possible transformations in the conduction of health promotion and the control of diseases. Finally, Fernandes *et al.* (2012) reinforce the valuation of this questioning, saying that the events favor significant experiences

for the student, providing reflections on current issues and, based on the experience and knowledge generated and stored, the development of a formation committed to the needs of the Brazilian reality.

The students stated that the training helped to manage emotions, especially in situations that were under pressure, and to create alternative solutions to adversities. According to Arroyo *et al.* (2010), the positive impact of the UE in the performance in the various professional segments was observed and the scope of action of the main areas is highlighted, as well as the need for scientific technical knowledge, posture and commitment. They also said about the UE's influence on the ability to execute techniques and procedures. However, in the article by Silva *et al.* (2013), students recognize that in extension, health skills are not limited to procedures, that relevance is in the articulation of the formative process with the production of new comprehensive care practices. Fadel *et al.* (2013), report that working with the community develops skills, enables actions and changes in the way of thinking and acting, recreating new ways of doing health.

Extension activities also influenced the effectiveness of communication with the team and with the public served. Attitudinal development is of paramount importance in professional formation; Arroyo *et al.* (2010), mentions in his study, that the project participants recognized the improvement in the way they relate to each other, worrying about their attitudes towards people in the most diverse situations. Oliveira (2015) reports that the student, when participating in extension actions, witnessing the locations of the population's reality, develops the construction of a dialogue that allows a relationship of mutual trust with people. Fadel *et al.* (2013), corroborate saying that the UE is able to promote coexistence through respect for the knowledge of others, exchange of experiences, knowledge and facilitate teamwork.

The authors emphasize that it is not enough to form instrumentalists or knowledge technicians, and it is essential to form professionals who are ethically committed and in the context of society's life, promoting social and academic transformations through the interaction between teaching, research and extension. They also highlight the recognition of the needs of the community, the development of social skills, autonomy, responsibility, creativity, learning from differences in values and culture, favoring the formation of a questioning and transforming character for a better world. In view of this, students reported improvement in academic achievement, development of perception aimed at identifying patients' needs, their role in social transformation, as well as in understanding the health/disease process in its multiple dimensions. Finally, when asked about the measures they would adopt for linking undergraduate courses, suggestions made by students were similarly cited in the articles.

Arroyo also suggests better dissemination of the extension program in the academic field, with calendar of dates and alternative times, as well as accessibility to the places where the event will take place (related to the existence of ramps, elevators and proximity to the bus stop). In addition, they mention innovation and integration between interdisciplinary activities, insertion of such activities in the Political Pedagogical Project as a mandatory curricular activity. It also reaffirms that the contributions of extension actions encourage curriculum flexibility, in order to include the extension program as a fundamental component in the curricula, proving its relevance in the transformation of academic practices and in the pedagogical projects of undergraduate health courses.

### Final considerations

In view of the results, it was found that the UE program had a positive impact on the academic performance of extension students, providing the development of skills, competences and ethical attitudes, evidenced by the affirmation in the improvement of academic performance, in the quantification of questions in different domains and in description of the students' perception about the effective contributions in their process and formative path as a person and professional.

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