

DOCUMENT OF RECIFE ABOUT THE EDUCATION OF HEALTH TECHNICIANS

Discussed and approved during the 3rd General Meeting of the International Education Network for Health Technicians (RETS) held on November 7 – 8, 2013 in Recife-PE, Brazil, as an activity prior to the 3rd Global Forum on Human Resources for Health meeting also scheduled to be held in Recife. The statement below presents the operating guidelines of RETS and its two sub-networks: the Technical Health Schools Network of the Union of South American Nations (RETS-UNASUR); and of the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (RETS-CPLP) from the conception. The goal of this statement is to showcase visibility and encourage reflections and discussions on and about education/training and the work of health technicians and their roles in the organizations and operations of health systems able to fully meet the health needs of populations.

RETS and its two sub-networks – RETS-UNASUR and RETS-CPLP -, that represents some 100 members from 19 countries, drafted this statement with intending to spread the analysis of the current context of health technicians education and the pertinent proposals arising therefrom.

I. Whereas:

1. In recent decades most of the member countries endured market-based liberalizing reforms. As such the policies pertinent to education and health were particularly reconfigured injecting tension between the historical legacies and revenue as these countries faced the challenges of globalization. Consequently, deepened structural, sociopolitical and cultural differences have emerged leading to increasing disparities within and among these countries;
2. The Education of Health Technicians condenses key elements both in terms of the regulations of labor relations and as well as educational policies, and it is also directly associated with the principles and characteristics of national and regional health policies;
3. Despite the fact that health technicians represent the most significant portion of the workforce involved in health services, there is lack of a unified definition of the expressions 'health technicians' and or 'technical professionals in health'. Although the terms 'technician' and 'professional' present certain specificity, the meaning of each one depends on the historical development of national educational systems and the particular character that health labor process assumes in each case. The lack of knowledge about 'who' they are, 'what' and 'where' they practice in the health field reaffirms the poor visibility of the category and the lack of professional recognition.
4. Accordingly the existing evidences:
 - The education of health technicians is determined by market imperatives (either in the institutional offering of education, or the curricular definition of specializations). This in turn contributes to deepen, in different degrees, the social inequalities in the national and regional contexts.
 - These health workforces receive education that focuses on a high degree of instrumentality, fragmentation and specialization. It tends to compromise a full ownership of the necessary skills to the work in health, that are presented in a disjointed manner of its scientific and social foundations, the development of a critical and reflective view about their social responsibilities, their position in the national health system and the social determinants of their professional performance, that is

precondition for the actual construction of the universal public health care systems that member countries aspire.

II. RETS and Its Sub-networks affirm the willingness to:

1. Encourage, within Networks, conducting studies that, in the same time that stimulate the development of comprehensive and integrated databases, generate new knowledge about the education of health technicians and their inclusion on labor market, as well as their mobility in national regional and global contexts.
2. Intensify dissemination, information and communication in health, as essential to the strengthening of a collective critical in the field of health technicians education, seeking to involve other partners and national authorities responsible for decision making on various dimensions involved in the issue.
3. Support comprehensive and integrated public projects that propose to articulate the education of health technicians and incorporate the social and scientific foundations of their activities, as well the assumptions and issues that guide the organization of national health systems, in accordance with the social determinants and a primary health care approach.

III. And claim that:

1. National, regional, global health authorities, and international organizations involved with health technicians' education, put the issue of the health technicians and the technical professional in their agendas and discussion spaces, in order to remove them from their current and historical positions of invisibility – in an essence working for the solution of the problems outlined in this statement.

Executive Secretariat of the RETS (rets@epsjv.fiocruz.br)

RETS website (www.rets.epsjv.fiocruz.br)

Escola Politécnica de Saúde Joaquim Venâncio – Av. Brasil, 4365 – Manguinhos – Rio de Janeiro – RJ – 21040-360 | ☎ +55 (21) 3865-9730 | ✉ rets@epsjv.fiocruz.br