


## Revisiting conceptions, history, events and themes of health-promoting universities

 <https://doi.org/10.56238/sevned2024.001-063>

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### ABSTRACT

Health Promotion (PrS) is a theme that has been increasingly popularized and expanded in social circles and, especially, in health. Since the First International Conference on PrS, held in Ottawa, Canada, in 1986, basic health requirements have been discussed, such as: peace, housing, education, food, income, stable ecosystem, sustainable resources, social justice and equity.

**Keywords:** Health Promotion, Universities, Students, Communities.



## INTRODUCTION

Health Promotion (PrS) is a theme that has been increasingly popularized and expanded in social circles and, especially, in health. Since the First International Conference on PrS, held in Ottawa, Canada, in 1986, basic health requirements have been discussed, such as: peace, housing, education, food, income, stable ecosystem, sustainable resources, social justice and equity (BRASIL, 2002; OLIVEIRA, 2017).

From this perspective, the gaze also turns to the university context, which is the initial milestone for the emergence of the Health Promoting Universities (UPS), from a context that not only encompasses students, but the community in general, highlighting that it is possible to improve the health profile through the development of teaching, research and knowledge sharing (FERREIRA; BRITO; SANTOS, 2017).

Aware that universities are recognized places of professional training, innovation and technological production, as such, they should be built as environments of experimentation, exploration and reflection, in which individuals form and build fairer societies. Therefore, it can be seen that Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have enormous potential to protect lives and promote the health of their population (students, professors and other employees) (ALMEIDA, 2017).

The activities developed by the HEI should be carried out through management, teaching, research and extension activities that facilitate the coexistence of environments, rules and knowledge in health. However, the implementation of these actions is only possible through organizational institutions that promote discussions about PrS (ALMEIDA, 2017).

Institutions that participate in programs on PrS benefit from the increase of their local, regional and national visibility, favoring the development of more pleasant and healthy environments for students, as well as for the general core of actors that make up the institution. In addition, a project of this magnitude can expand the credibility of research with potential innovators in the area, aimed at finding solutions on quality of life and combating social and health inequalities (MELLO; MOYSES; MOYSES, 2010).

In this way, it is highlighted that UPS acts as a coordinated resource/instrument that facilitates the development of students as propagators of knowledge, however, the key to the full functioning of this model are all those involved, whether they are teachers, other servers, as well as the community that is and will be benefited by the development of these actions.

Considering the aspects previously exposed, the objective is to review the historical, theoretical and conceptual aspects of PUs, as well as to highlight the challenges that are imposed on their implementation in the Brazilian university scenario.



## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This is a narrative review of the literature. This type of review allows us to deepen the state of the art on a given subject, from a theoretical, conceptual and contextual point of view, and is, therefore, a general compilation of the knowledge produced (ROTHER, 2007).

The searches were carried out from February 2023 to February 2024, using the keyword "Health Promoting Universities", in virtual databases, such as databases indexed in the Virtual Health Library (VHL), Google Scholar,<sup>®</sup> in the Catalog of Theses and Dissertations of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES),<sup>®</sup> in books and/or manuals found on the internet.

The findings were organized and analyzed according to their convergences, compiled in a descriptive way according to the new and/or complementary information they addressed.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For a better appropriation of the material found about the proposed research theme, this session is divided into topics that support the understanding of the historical aspects, conceptions, themes and requirements to become a UPS and, finally, the challenges in the Brazilian reality.

### HISTORICAL-CONCEPTUAL RETROSPECTIVE OF UPS

The UPS movement arose from strategies to define healthy environments led by the World Health Organization (WHO) in the 1980s, with initiatives in cities, schools, and workplaces, whose planning aimed to make this scenario more harmonious, taking into account factors such as ambience and comfort (ARROYO; RICE, 2009).

In 1996, the Pan American Health Organization implemented the Health-Promoting Schools Initiative (PAHO/WHO, 1996), which later led to the creation of UPS (NUNES *et al.*, 2021). In the same year, the first UPS International Congress took place in Lancashire, United Kingdom (OLIVEIRA, 2017).

The UPS Movement in Latin America had its initial formal milestone in 2003, when the First UPS Congress took place in the city of Santiago, Chile, designed with the purpose of promoting the operational milestones of PrS contained in the Ottawa Charter (HARTMANN; ANDRADE; YAMAGUCHI, 2019). Over the following years, other congresses/meetings took place, which are listed in the table below.

Table 1: International Congresses and National Events on UPS. Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, 2024.

<b>Congress</b>	<b>Theme</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Year</b>
II Congress of Health-Promoting Universities	University/Higher Education Institution Promoting Health	Edmonton – Canada	2005
III Congress of Health-Promoting Universities	Multiplying Training Environments	Juarez – Mexico	2007
IV International Congress of Health-Promoting Universities	The Social Commitment of Universities	Pamplona – Spain	2009
V International Congress of Health-Promoting Universities	University Communities Building Health	San Jose - Costa Rica	2011
VI International Congress of Health-Promoting Universities	Social and University Crossroads for Health	San Juan – Porto Rico	2013
VII International Congress of Health-Promoting Universities	Promising Paths: Research, Practices, and Policies for Healthy and Sustainable Campuses	Kelowna – Canada	2015
VIII Ibero-American Congress of Health-Promoting Universities	Health Promotion and University. Building Healthy Social and Educational Environments	Alicante – Spain	2017
I National Meeting of Health Promoting Universities	A collective construction	Brasilia - Brazil	2018
II National Meeting of the Brazilian Network of Health Promoting Universities	The development of the network in Brazil	Brasilia - Brazil	2020
X Ibero-American Congress of Health Promoting Universities	Higher Education, Health Promotion and Sustainable Development	Coimbra – Portugal	2022

Source: OLIVEIRA, 2017; DAMASCENO, PIMENTEL, 2022.

The events mentioned had the Ottawa Charter as a guiding element for the expansion of the PrS in their discussions, which also subsidized the development of other international documents/declarations (Chart 2) of PrS, arising from the events that took place in Chile, Canada, Mexico, Spain, Costa Rica, among others. Following the operational milestones contained in such documents is the foundation for building a healthy environment.

Table 2: Documents from UPS events around the world. Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, 2024.

<b>Title</b>	<b>Key Takeaways</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
<b>Health Promoting universities Project: criteria and strategies for a new WHO European Network: report on a WHO round table meeting, Lancaster.</b>	It was suggested that the guiding principles pay particular attention to equity, accountability, and sustainability, and in order to convince potential members of the value of the network, it should be evidence-based. To facilitate project management, participants agreed that guidelines for managers should be put together, including an explanation of organizational development.	Finally, a four-step strategy for launching the project, including future products, was summarized.
<b>Edmonton Charter for Health Promoting Universities and institutions of Higher Education.</b>	Definitions: Health Promotion; Institutions that promote health in higher education.	Principles of Promoting Health; Audience and parties Interested; Features; Commitment to Action; Next Steps.
<b>RIUPS. Newsletter.</b>	Okanagan International Charter for Health Promotion in Universities and Institutions of Higher Education; Advances; News; Upcoming Health Promotion Events; Members of the Ibero-American Network of Health-Promoting Universities.	The new Board of Directors of the Spanish Network of Healthy Universities (REUS) was constituted; The Mexican Network of Health-Promoting Universities and the Pan American Health Organization recognize the works of the Universidad Veracruzana; Activities of the Spanish Network of



		Health Promoting Universities around Healthy Eating; Activities of the Mexican Network of Health-Promoting Universities; Members of the Ibero-American Network of Health-Promoting Universities
<b>Guide for Costa Rican Health Promoting Universities.</b>	This document compiles the experience of the Costa Rican Network of Health-Promoting Universities (REDCUPS) formed since 2002 by the Public Universities: University of Costa Rica, National University of Costa Rica, Technological Institute of Costa Rica and State University at a Distance. The document presents: 1 Historical context; 1.1 Actions taken; 2. Identification and definition of problems; 3. Guiding Principles of Costa Rican Universities Promoting Health; 4. Substantive approaches	Based on the diagnosis, factors related to the type of diet, physical activity and recreation, consumption of alcohol, drugs and tobacco, the experience of human sexuality, human development and mental health are considered. This led to the establishment of a working methodology of the committees, each with a subject related to health and relevant to the students.
<b>Declaration of Pamplona. IV Congress of Health-Promoting Universities.</b>	It brings some guidelines that allow us to reflect on future work, which is our great and immediate professional challenge for the sustainable development of Health Promoting Universities	Among the most significant, the following topics are proposed: Mobilization of wills in the academic field; Institutional commitment; Human and financial resources; Institutional infrastructure; UPS Social Responsibility; Healthy and safe workplace; Strategic plan; Training and training with a comprehensive approach / Health Promotion; Process and impact assessments; research, production and dissemination of knowledge; Constitution and networking; Intersectoral and multidisciplinary committee; Multisectoral vs Multi-Multidisciplinary Alliances – Dependencies"
<b>Guide for self-assessment and recognition of health-promoting higher education institutions.</b>	Origin and rationale of this guide: In Chile, 84% of the disease burden is due to non-communicable diseases; Association with factors such as smoking, obesity, low physical activity, poor diet; All lifestyle-related behaviors; 35% of premature mortality and 20% of disability burden are associated with the use of tobacco, alcohol, psychoactive drugs, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, and unsafe sex.	The guide allows the HEI Health Promoter to identify the most deficient aspects that require the elaboration of improvement plans. It also makes it easier to identify areas of work that are being successful and effective by providing positive reinforcement.
<b>Guide for Healthy Colleges and Other Higher Education Institutions.</b>	The contents of this Guide could be constructed from the review of international bibliography and national experiences on the subject, interviews with key people, focus groups and work with groups.	Given the complexity of the subject, this guide tries to simplify the strategies, with the aim of inducing Higher Education authorities, student leaders and associations.
<b>Okanagan Charter: an International Charter for Health Promoting Universities and Colleges.</b>	The Charter has two calls to action for institutions of higher education: 1. Embed health in all aspects of campus culture, throughout administration, operations, and academic mandates. 2. Lead health promotion actions and collaboration locally and globally.	The following are the guiding principles of how to mobilize systemic systems and action on campus: Use system-wide settings and approaches; Ensure comprehensive, campus-wide approaches; Use participatory approaches and engage the voice of students and others; Develop transdisciplinary collaborations and intersectoral partnerships; Promote research, innovation, and evidence-informed action; Build strengths; Valuing the contexts and priorities of local and indigenous communities; Act on an existing universal responsibility.



<b>A New Look at the Movement of Health-Promoting Universities in the Americas.</b>	The following areas of collaboration and cooperation are set out in the constitutive document: information, criteria and guides, training, teaching materials, research and capacity building projects, documentation and dissemination.	Sample of National Experiences of Health Promotion in Institutions, University and Expressions of Adhesion to the Initiative.
<b>Letter from Brasilia</b>	the need to promote an organizational culture based on the values and principles of the global movement for Health Promotion; the social role of higher education institutions in social inclusion and in the educational and instructive process of society, in particular for health promotion; the need to defend quality health and education as universal social rights, guaranteed by the Federal Constitution of 1988, as public goods conquered by Brazilian society. the inseparability between teaching, research, extension and management to improve actions that promote health.	To be a local, regional and international reference network in health promotion that fosters policies, actions and spaces in the university in order to favor the full development of human beings in their relationship with the planet

Source: DAMASCENE, PIMENTEL, 2022

For conceptualization purposes, UPS refers to HEIs whose organizational culture points to the values and principles associated with the global movement of health supply, and which consistently supports institutional policies in this sense, becoming an environment conducive to healthy action to influence the lifestyles of individuals who exist in this context (NUNES *et al.*, 2021).

Although the concept of UPS is relatively new, the studies are based on key elements for the success of the actions (OLEGÁRIO; 2014):

- Creation of health policies that serve faculty, students, and staff; training of teachers and professionals;
- Inclusion of health education in the curriculum;
- Research on education and health;
- Physical and social environment that promotes safety, physical exercise habits, healthy eating, periodic medical examinations, creation of green areas, sanitary facilities, spaces for pleasant studies;
- Disease prevention campaigns;
- Healthy and safe sex;
- Reduction of drug and alcohol use;
- Development of skills for self-care;
- Healthcare management; and
- Healthy social relationships.

To this end, some HEIs have developed their own documents for institutional (re)structuring so that they meet the assumptions of the UPS, among them, the *Guía para Universidades saludables y otras instituciones de educación superior* (2006) stands out, in which a group of academics and



professionals from different Chilean universities, in collaboration with the Ministry of Health of that country, developed this Guide for Self-Assessment and Recognition of HEIs (LANGE; VIO, 2006).

This Guide has a formative and guiding character, which assists institutions in decision-making in relation to the PrS program developed, in addition to encouraging the elaboration of an improvement plan for the well-being of their communities.

## THEMES AND CRITERIA FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A UPS

According to the *Guide for Healthy Universities and Other Higher Education Institutions*, there are five areas that should be part of the process of building a UPS (LANGE; VIO, 2006):

- University policies;
- Organizational structure;
- Decision-making processes;
- Curriculum design; and
- Physical environment.

In which there are five fields of primary interventions for PrS in universities, considered as necessary requirements for the functioning and well-being of those involved, namely (LANGE; VIO, 2006).

- Nutrition;
- Physical activity;
- Alcohol and drug use;
- Social and environmental factors.

The specifications provided for obtaining the UPS seal provide that HEIs must include at least three of the following items in their documentation in the planning process (HARTMANN; ANDRADE; YAMAGUCHI, 2019).

- 1) Commitment document for the development initiative;
- 2) Form a working group to implement initiatives that cover different areas;
- 3) Have had an action plan for at least one year;
- 4) Incorporate initiatives into community action plans.

The guide also suggests some steps for the solidification and construction of the UPS, as shown in the table below.



Table 3: Actions and activities for the construction of UPS. Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil, 2024.

Share	Activity
Formation of the coordinating team	It should be composed of representatives from the different university levels or other natural leaders
Socialization of the idea at the level of university authorities and budget support for a baseline diagnosis	Conduct a baseline and diagnosis of the lifestyles of students, academics, and staff.
Presentation of the results to the higher authorities, proposal of a strategic plan for the Healthy University and institutional commitment	Achieve the institution's explicit commitment to the implementation of the strategic plan. This support is essential for the beginning of the work and should be made explicit in a Term of Commitment or other type of institutional document. This act of commitment is the first step in the design of a healthy future university policy.
Awareness, communication and internal dissemination	It is essential to sensitize the university community in this new way of approaching university work, generating the participation of all actors. You can use events, articles, newsletters, exhibitions, web pages, e-mail or posters. Generate research that contributes to knowledge on the subject of Health Promotion.
Program design and implementation	There is an interrelationship between the five themes of Health Promotion so that starting with any one of them can be useful for others. For example, encouraging and achieving an active life helps you feel better and stimulates associativity, contributes to weight loss through healthy eating and facilitates the prevention of alcohol, drug and tobacco use. It is recommended that the first actions, those that will mark the program of which are attractive, and not punitive.
Monitoring and evaluation	It is necessary to establish objectives, targets, and indicators, so that monitoring and evaluation can be carried out to guide the creation or redesign of the program.

Source.: LANGE; VIO, 2006.

The above-mentioned criteria for the formation of a UPS are very clear and objective, but the effectiveness of the UPS includes a well-consolidated strategic plan, which needs to be executed in practice with the combination of all the pertinent requirements, that is, it is a two-way street, in which there must be this collaboration of those involved so that everyone is benefited. emphasizing that this process should occur in a natural way, where the individuals involved feel comfortable participating.

Currently, there are several international and national networks of health-promoting universities. Among them, some examples stand out:

- *German Network Health Promoting University* (1995);
- *Costa Rican Network of Health-Promoting Universities* (REDCUPS – 2002);
- *Mexican Network of Health-Promoting Universities* (RMUPS – 2004);
- *Network of Health Promoting Universities in the United Kingdom* (UCLan - 2006);
- *National Network of Health-Promoting Universities* (REDUPS – 2006)
- *Ibero-American Network of Health-Promoting Universities* (RIUPS – 2007);
- *Spanish Network of Health-Promoting Universities* (REUS – 2008);
- *Colombian Network of Higher Education Institutions for Health Promotion* (REDECUPS – 2010);
- *Peruvian Network of Healthy Universities* (RUS – 2015);
- *Canadian Network of Health Promotion Universities and Schools* (2016);





- *Tertiary Wellbeing Aotearoa New Zealand* (TWANZ – 2016);
- Brazilian Network of Health Promoting Universities (REBRAUPS – 2018).

## UPS IN BRAZIL: A MOVEMENT IN THE MAKING

Since the implementation of the National Health Promotion Policy (PNaPS) in the Brazilian scenario, HP has been reaffirmed and conceived as a cross-cutting theme that presupposes an intersectoral articulation, whose purpose is to give visibility to the factors that put the health of the population at risk and to the differences between needs, territories and cultures present in our country (BRASIL, 2014)

Thinking about HC in the university context emerges, among the themes contemplated in the PNaPS that direct the organizational processes of the HC agendas, in item IV, which highlights the need to relate the prioritized theme to people's living and working environments and territories, identifying opportunities for including health promotion in the actions and activities developed, in a participatory and dialogical manner (BRASIL, 2014; GATES; 2017).

In Brazil, some universities have participated in the Ibero-American Network of Health Promoting Universities since 2009, including the University of Brasília (UnB), which was certified as UPS in 2016 during the II International Seminar on Health Promoters, where a term of adherence to RIUPS was signed (ALMEIDA, 2017).

Since 2007, RIUPS has brought together institutions from Latin America and Spain that seek to develop a culture of health and well-being in their university communities (RIUPS, 2015). According to Santiago *et al* (2021), the network was formalized at the Third International Congress of Health-Promoting Universities, held from October 3 to 6, 2007, at the *Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad Juárez*, Mexico.

In Europe, there is also a network of UPSs at the regional level, the European Health Promoting Universities (EuroHPU), which is composed of researchers and administrators from European universities that aim to build a learning environment and organizational culture that strengthens the health of academics and employees (HERAUD, 2013).

It was necessary to have a Brazilian network to interconnect national universities and discuss positive changes in our reality, and it was precisely in 2018, between April 25 and 27, that the First Brazilian Meeting of the Network of Health Promoting Universities took place, held by the Faculty of Health Sciences of the University of Brasília (FCS/UnB) with the support of PAHO/WHO and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) The objective on the agenda is the foundation of the Brazilian Network of Health Promoting Universities (REBRAUPS) (UNICESUMAR, 2018).

The growth of the network at the national level finds considerable support from Higher Education Institutions, both public and private, which made it possible to hold the II REBRAUPS



Meeting on November 11 and 12, 2020, with Larissa Polejack (UnB), Cléria Bittar (REBRAUPS), Regiane Rezende (PAHO), Leides Moura (UnB), Clarice Araujo (UFRJ), Maria Lucia dos Santos (UFRJ) (SANTIAGO *et al.*, 2021).

REBRAUPS is currently in the process of structuring led by professors from the National University of Brasília (UnB), with professionals from all over the country, including professors and students from the Fluminense Federal University (UFF) present in its axes and working groups (SANTIAGO *et al.*, 2021).

The method of implementation of the HEIs to obtain the UPS seal occurred through meetings organized by the universities involved in the construction of REBRAUPS mentioned above, the I Meeting of REBRAUPS aimed precisely to attract public universities in Brazil to participate in this movement.

Professor Elza de Souza from the Department of Collective Health of (FCS/UnB) was in charge of the committee of the first event held by UnB in 2018, she requested that an invitation be sent by email to all Universities in Brazil, so that they could participate in the I Meeting, about 25 institutions responded to the email and sent the required documentation, in which a brief report of the health promotion activities carried out at the institution was requested, as well as a letter requesting the entry of the HEI into the Brazilian Network and the Ibero-American Network, the universities that sent the entire report were certified with the UPS seal (UFRJ, 2020).

Among the institutions that currently make up RebraUPS are (AMIM, 2020).

- University of Fortaleza (UNIFOR);
- University of Franca (UNIFRAN);
- University of Brasília (UnB);
- Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS);
- University Center of Maringá. (UNICESUMAR);
- State University of Goiás (UEG);
- Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG);
- Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC);
- Federal University of Paraíba (UFPB);
- Federal University of Mato Grosso de Sul Foundation (UFMS);
- Federal University of Mato Grosso (UFMT);
- Euro-American University Center (UNIEURO);
- Federal University of Latino-American Integration (UNILA);
- Federal University of Health Sciences of Porto Alegre (UFCSPA);
- Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES);
- Methodist University of São Paulo (UMESP);



- Amazonas State University (UEA);
- University Center of Planalto de Araxá (UNIRAXÁ);
- Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR);
- Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM)

Some challenges need to be met in order for more universities to receive the IES Health Promoter seal, the institutions that make up RebraUPS are more concentrated in the south/southeast region of the country, previously highlighted by Amim (2020). The events provided by UnB in partnership with PAHO and UFRJ are gateways to the academic community, which explain the entire historical and evolutionary concept of this movement.

It is notorious that there is a need for more participating institutions, so it is extremely important to draw the attention of the institutions in relation to the events, as it is these meetings that enable the integration of the HEIs into the project.

It is important to emphasize that the active voice in this process are the academics, who, based on the construction of research focused on this area, promote discussions and generate interest on the part of professors and managers, being also a way to present the project to the HEIs and attract these institutions to be part of the Brazilian network, and the events that take place annually.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

In this sense, the importance of UPS is highlighted in terms of the style and quality of life of students and other professionals/collaborators who are part of the institution, it is worth mentioning the importance of understanding the aspects that influence health and the environment in which the individual is inserted.

The UPS movement has been strengthened in several countries, with the creation of new networks and also the integration of new universities into the movement, in Brazil this expansion process goes through gradually with about 20 universities integrated into the Brazilian Network of Health Promoting Universities.

This review pointed out theoretical aspects pertinent to Health Promoting Universities, however, in view of the different realities experienced in the different Brazilian regions regarding social, economic, cultural, educational aspects, among others, there is a need for other studies that contemplate, in a more in-depth way, challenges and possibilities for the implementation and/or execution of UPS in the national territory.



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