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Doctoral School of Philosophy and Social-Political Sciences

**Second Career for Adult Students in an Academic
Reconversion Program**

Long Abstract

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to increase the number of nursing school graduates as a way to alleviate the existing shortage of nursing professionals in Israel, whose rate currently stands at 5 per 1000 people, about half the OECD average (OECD, 2017, 2018b). The students in the nursing reconversion program are adults who possess a prior academic degree and occupational experience. The students show willingness to study the field as a realization of a professional vocation in life. The nursing reconversion program is an accelerated course of study. As a result, the program has a significant dropout rate, and its students face difficulties fulfilling their other life-roles such as family responsibilities, and providing for their family. This study offers a model to decrease the dropout rates in the nursing reconversion track.

The study was conducted using the mixed methods approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative research. The qualitative part of the study included semi-structured interviews with candidates and students reaching the end of their studies. Narratives were gathered from the standard admission forms. The quantitative portion was based on collecting data from 160 questionnaires examining the willingness of students to study nursing. The study population included four groups: Three groups from the nursing reconversion track, namely, candidates, students reaching the end of their studies, and dropouts, and one group of students from the academic track who were sampled for comparison.

The main findings of the study were the students' need for social and financial support, and the need for an accelerated program for students with families. The model presented in the study enables adults to be part of the nursing reconversion program while working and taking care of a family. The model includes the extension of the study period or the customization of an individual program for each student, according to their needs.

Keywords: *Nursing, Nursing training, Academic reconversion, Adult education, Second career.*

INTRODUCTION

This study deals with nursing reconversion of academic graduates in pursuit of a second career. Due to a continuous shortage of nursing professionals, nursing schools in Israel offer certified nurse studies (Wolfson Academic School of Nursing, n.d.). This certification allows the graduate to register and work as a nurse under the requirements of the Public Health Regulations (Ministry of Health, n.d.). Academic graduates who participate in nursing reconversion programs are usually older, have families, have previous occupational backgrounds and at least one academic degree, in accordance with the requirements of the nursing division (Wolfson School of Nursing, n.d.).

The term "reconversion" was originally coined in the mid-14th century in the context of a religion transformation. It originates from the French word *conversion* and the Latin word *conversionem*. Since 1921 this noun was used to refer to buildings and in 1946, Sigmund Freud, coined the use of the noun as a name of a disorder, Conversion disorder, to describe "hysteria" (Online Etymology Dictionary, n.d.).

Reconversion is defined as the opportunity to start a new career in a different field. This definition was not chosen arbitrarily: The term retraining, in the sense of training oneself to do things again, could have also been used. However, within this definition, the training refers to the profession that was studied in the past. This is not the object of the current research. We do refer to training but in a new career, one in which the individual has never been employed.

Another possible term is bifurcation which expresses a divergence into two distinct branches or parts. However, this term, which is used in many sociological studies of nursing (Négroni, 2003; Denave, 2015), highlights the distinction between the individual's current and former life and not on their choice of a new career, which is the core of this research.

The choice of nursing as a second career can be considered a social indicator, indicating a movement toward improving an individual's status. Individuals in western countries, among which is Israel, who live in a capitalistic framework, aspire to acquire the means (e.g. certificate studies) to improve their social, cultural, and economic status. Those who choose nursing as a second career already possess academic degrees and usually an active career as well. They are experienced in gathering cultural capital – their academic studies, as well as economic capital – their occupation. Students in reconversion programs choose to change the layout of their different types of capital and to initiate an acquisition of new cultural capital in the form of a certified nurse diploma. There are many reasons for this choice: to change their

financial status, to increase their cultural capital or their social capital. The consequence of reconversion is generally improvement in a student's status compared to that of their social peers (Enoch, 2002). Therefore, this concept seems the most appropriate for describing the process of reconversion into nursing.

The study methodology is based on the mixed methods approach which includes both qualitative and quantitative research. The study aimed to find internal and external patterns in the choice of nursing as a second career, and utilized life stories, participant-as-observer observations, and interviews with students. This study makes a distinction between individual internal disposition cases, in which the student feels an inner impulse or need to quit their former occupation and begin the study of nursing, and individual external disposition cases, in which external-social elements influence the student to choose the nursing field. These factors were measured in a closed-ended questionnaire.

In addition, the study seeks to create a model that will help examine a sequence of circumstantial events, through which similarities can be found between the courses taken by the students. This model will allow to locate a precise point in time where the individual has made the choice of making a change in their life and to begin nursing studies. Finding such a point in time might help locating suitable students who choose to change their profession at the right time. It is possible that locating this point in time in the context of social stratification will allow to reach a general conclusion with regard to certain strata and their attitude towards a second career, and specifically towards choosing a career in nursing.

Based on Bourdieu's model (1986), the themes of symbolic capital (the prestigious status), economic capital (worthwhileness), and cultural capital (academic studies and personal enrichment) will be examined in the context of the willingness of nursing reconversion students to begin their studies. The way students internalize the socialization of professional identity was examined using interviews and questionnaires. In addition, the study also examined the way in which the generation to which the students belong, affects their social and professional mobility.

Nursing is considered an ancient feminine, traditional, and technical profession (Popovici, 2012). Furthermore, it is physically and psychologically demanding, therefore, it may seem that older people with an academic background and an established career will choose to study a profession that is less physically demanding in the second part of their lives (Shachaf, 2014).

Why, therefore, do academic graduates choose nursing reconversion for a second career? To answer this question, the study relies on sociological and psychological theories, which explain the choice of nursing through the personality and inclinations of the student. In addition, mapping and analyzing the mixed methods research findings enables to find patterns in the behavior and choices of the students of nursing reconversion programs and the factors that help them to succeed in their studies. Another essential subject at the focus of this study, is the phenomena of dropout among students in nursing reconversion programs.

The Rationale for This Study

Understanding the reasons for dropping out of the reconversion program will help to improve the process of recruiting and admitting students to graduate nursing studies. Analyzing these causes will allow a focused approach to develop for a specific target population who has the necessary qualifications for nursing, but due to external¹ and internal² dispositions, fail to continue with the program. This will facilitate finding solutions for these students to overcome their challenges and to continue their studies, and therefore, will allow for more qualified students to participate in the program. This will help to overcome the shortage of nurses.

Research Aims

1. To understand the internal and external dispositions that motivate an individual to choose nursing as a second career.
2. To understand the conditions leading the students to success or dropout of their reconversion studies to nursing.
3. To understand the interaction between instructors and students, with the aim to prevent dropout or failure in their reconversion studies to nursing, with the aim to enlarge the number of graduates and thus to increase the number of nurses in Israel.

Research Questions

1. What are the internal and external dispositions that affect an individual's choice of studying a second career in nursing?

¹ External dispositions – The institutional social structure.

² Internal dispositions – Represents practices that arise in relation to the habitus as a system of cognitive structures and motivations. In the course of practice and always directed to the realization of practical functions.

2. What are the conditions leading the students to success or dropout of their reconversion studies to nursing?
3. What is the interaction between instructors and students, with the aim to prevent dropout or failure in their reconversion studies to nursing, with the aim to enlarge the number of graduates and thus to increase the number of nurses in Israel?

Gap in Knowledge

Studies on the individual motivations of working academics found various reasons for the reconversion from a prior profession to nursing, namely, achieving a stable income and work place, the prestige in certain sectors associated with being part of the health administration, and the presence of a role model in the nursing profession in close proximity, whether by being close to the caregiver or to a patient (Price & McGillis, 2014).

However, failures of students during the reconversion course, after changing careers, might contribute to the lack of nurses in the international, national and local arenas, as well as a personal lack of confidence in the student. Many studies and theoretical approaches deal with the contributing factors for failing nursing studies.

However, no extensive research exists on the subject of creating a model that would reduce or eliminate failure and dropout rates in reconversion courses; research on this subject will increase the number of nurses entering the job market after their studies.

Research Hypotheses

Internal disposition

1. Students choose reconversion to nursing as a result of an experience with a nurse in their close surrounding.
2. Adult students are motivated to choose reconversion to nursing by inner values acquired in the process of socialization.

External disposition

3. Adult students choose reconversion to nursing as a result of an unexpected positive or negative event.
4. Students choose reconversion to nursing as a result of career development and advancement options.

Significance of the Research

Understanding the theoretical and empirical knowledge accumulated in this sociological study will enable me as a nursing studies coordinator to change and soften policy makers to give an opportunity to adults with academic degrees who are very interested in becoming nurses and succeeding in nursing studies, by creating a unique program for students who are struggling. This alternative proposal will contribute to those who wish to advance their goals in a personal manner, whose implications influence the shaping of society as a better, more just society, which allows all its members an equal opportunity. In addition, it will reduce the shortage of nurses in the State of Israel in order to promote health and medical care for all its residents.

I. LITERATURE REVIEW

I.1. Theoretical Aspects of Career Choice

This chapter reviews the theoretical aspects of choosing a profession as they are discussed in the fields of sociology and psychology, while extracting a conceptual framework to answer the main question of this research: what factors lead an individual to choose an initial academic profession and to reconvert later to the nursing profession?

Although a second career is a relatively common occurrence in the 21st century, a second nursing career is somewhat different because of its physical demands, the distance it creates from family and home because of the work in shifts, and the need to display compassion and care towards others. These characteristics usually deter potential individuals seeking a second career.

This study is based on two main approaches: the objective and the subjective. The objective approach views social structures as means to examine relationships between the structure and society. This approach is complemented by the subjective approach, which focuses on the individual as the subject of study.

The French intellectual Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002) began to study society as a result of the social gaps he witnessed in Algeria. Bourdieu resided in Algeria during the late 1950s, when Algeria was occupied by the French. In Algeria Bourdieu encountered gaps between capitalistic based financial processes and the locals' patterns of action and conduct. These gaps were examined through schematic definitions and structured rules Bourdieu had to

"bend" and transform into more invisible strategies, tendencies, and actions. The difference between the capitalist world and the traditional world created a state of uncertainty about the future. This uncertainty stood in opposition to the traditional social structures and was integrated with the dimension of time (Calhoun, 2006).

I.2. Sociological Theories of Career Choice

Since this study deals with the reasons for choosing nursing as a second career, it is necessary to discuss sociological theories in the field of career choice. The profession of nursing is considered prestigious by some and not prestigious by others. What are the socialization components in an individual's array of considerations to choose and acquire a prestigious profession? And on the other hand, what are the possible conditions and factors for choosing a profession despite its low prestige? These questions may be answered by comparing the theories of Max Weber (1864-1920) that deal with the concept of capitalism and rationalization as part of the various conflict theories partially based on Marxist theory, the theories of Pierre Bourdieu's, which deal with different types of capital, and the mobility theory which may explain the links and points of interface between Weber and Bourdieu and other theories regarding certain aspects of the individual decision making process.

Therefore, in order to understand the reasons a person chooses to study a prestigious profession with an academic degree, we must first understand two essential components of Weber's teachings: rationalization, and its inherent discussion of the connections between the economic sphere and other social spheres. Along with these components we should indicate Weber's conception of the task of sociology, that is, to enable us to understand and interpret social phenomena. An additional component is the influence of the teachings of Karl Marx (1818-1893) on Weber's thought. In the eyes of Weber, Marx's theories relied on the conception that existing social structures are derived of economic factors. Weber aimed to examine this claim, and to also examine the opposite process: What is the influence of ideas on the economy, and what is the influence of ideas on large scale processes? What is the influence of religious ideas, among others, on these processes, including economic processes? While Marx examined the deterministic effect of economy on ideas, dealing with the economic dimension of status and social stratification, Weber aimed to examine stratification not only in its economic aspect, but also in its aspects of power and prestige (Rietzer, 2006).

I.3. Conceptual Framework

As mentioned, this study deals with the phenomenon of reconversion to nursing. Therefore, the study goals are to identify the factors involved in the decision to change one's career to nursing, to discern between successful study behaviors and failing or abandoning the study of nursing as a second career, to examine the internal and external individual inclinations to choose nursing as a second career, and to use these insights to develop a model to improve predictive capabilities regarding the suitability of adult learners in this study program. This resonates with the research questions: What are the internal and external dispositions in an individual's choice of studying a second career in nursing? What are the conditions leading the students to success or dropout of their reconversion studies to nursing? What are the internal and external inclinations of an individual's choice to study a second career in nursing? What is the interaction between instructors and students, with the aim to prevent dropout or failure in their reconversion studies to nursing, with the aim to enlarge the number of graduates, and thus to increase the number of nurses in Israel?

Table 1 presents the main theories underlying the conceptual framework of this study.

Table 1. Main theories underlying the conceptual framework of this study.

Pierre Bourdieu	The forms of capital, Cultural theory: An anthology, The Rules of Art, Genesis and Structure of Literacy field.
Daniel J. Levinson	Theory of positive adult development: "Seasons of one's life"
Max Weber	Theory of social stratification
Claude Dubar	Sociology of "professional identities"

Figure 1 depicts the concepts extracted from the aforementioned theories and the general context of the study to form its conceptual framework.



Figure 1. The conceptual framework of this study.

Professional reversion to nursing

Being the focus of this study, the term professional reversion was chosen as a central concept. Therefore, it appears in the center of the figure. It refers to working academic graduates who decide to change course in life, whether due to constraints and circumstances, or a courageous conscious choice. This is not a new social phenomenon, although in recent years it has been receiving more legitimacy (Optalka, 2008). A second career is sometimes a result of a mid-life transition (Levinson, 1978).

Blich (2014) presents this crisis through the lens of Gottfredson’s (1981) theory of circumscription and compromise. This theory deals with compromise, that is, an adult can choose a certain profession as a compromise, either because the individual cannot stand up to certain requirements or cannot make time for studies, but at times also because of a certain circumscription process which eliminates many relevant professions from consideration.

Sometimes choosing an unfulfilling profession which does not contribute to the individual’s self-realization can lead to professional reversion (Blich, 2014). The current study examines the factors involved in the decision to reconvert, and specifically to the nursing profession.

Nursing

Nursing is a profession that requires the nurse to provide psychological and physical support and includes direct contact with the patient's body, as well as providing basic medical treatment around the clock (Shachaf, 2014). Nursing is considered part of the health professions and is at the center of medical caregiving in Israel and around the world. With the development of technology and the increase in life expectancy, nursing has become a required profession (Keshishian, 2010), and has gone through many changes throughout the years. Today, nursing training is done in an academic framework, and the nursing professional is required to display administrative abilities, to work in a multidisciplinary team and to provide excellent and safe evidence-based treatments. Since the current study examines the individual's inclinations to choose this profession, this concept is necessary for the aims of this study.

Social stratification

Social stratification is expressed in the context of professional reconversion when the individual cannot really choose a certain profession due to social and economic reasons. In many cases a profession will determine an individual's status, for example, individuals who work as laborers because they lack education, guidance and empowerment. According to a Weberian analysis, it is the system itself that did not give the individual any choice but to stay in the same low status as their parents. For these individuals the possibility of developing a second career can imply a meaningful change in life. For example, individuals who worked all their lives as factory workers, can at a later stage enter a second career track through courses and different training programs. This example demonstrates how a second career can be a principal means to break social stratification, but in practice this option is not open for everybody (Maman & Neuman, 1990).

Social mobility

Social mobility complements social stratification: as stratification is becomes more pronounced, mobility becomes less common. In order for individuals to move upwards in the class hierarchy, they have to access economic capital, status, and political power (Weber, 1991). Bourdieu (2011) adds a fourth type of capital: cultural capital. This refers to the knowledge and content required by the individual to penetrate and integrate into a higher class. In contrast to other types of capital, cultural capital can be acquired, and it is critical for

social mobility. In addition, intergenerational transitions are also an influential factor on social mobility.

Intergenerational processes

In the past, it was customary for a person to continue in their parents' profession. That is, the son usually continued the father's path and the daughter the mother's. The situation is different now even though the parents' profession still influences their child's choice to some degree, especially in more traditional societies. This can be explained through different approaches. Gottfredson's theory of circumscription and compromise, discussed by Blich (2014), asserts that the individual's career choice is affected by the environment of their childhood, in watching the parents and other role models, and by the values at home. A possible result is that in some circumstances and with a lack of exposure to other professions, such as nursing, individuals are eventually absorbed into the parents' profession without making a real choice. Through advertisement and consultation, the individual could reconvert to nursing as an adult.

Adult education

According to Collins (1971) the most significant tool to realize a career change is the acquisition of education, and it is essential for promoting social mobility and to rising in class hierarchy. This approach connects to Marx's conception of the class struggle, according to which the higher classes intentionally act to prevent the lower classes from advancement and progress. One efficient way of doing so is to make it harder on them to acquire education. Efficient frameworks of adult studies can bridge the gaps preventing adults from realizing the change they wish to make and reaching desired jobs and occupations. These gaps can be financial, educational, lack of confidence or even lack of free time. To encourage occupational changes among adult workers, this type of studies and training has to be accessible, low-cost, and adapted to the needs of working people (Collins, 1971).

Academic graduates with a career who go through professional reconversion, are adults with a previous professional identity.

Professional identity

Professional identity is not about "where do you work", but rather about "what can you do", what are your skills and talents (Caza & Creary, 2016).

Professional identity does not only improve the individual's self-perception but also their idea of how other people perceive them (Neary, 2014). Neary recognizes a number of conditions for the individual to adopt a certain professional identity: (1) the individual as a clearly defined role; (2) the individual's profession requires specialization or studies; (3) the role grants status and prestige; (4) there's a significant professional unionizing through which the individual can identify with other workers in the field (Neary, 2014).

Career development

Career choice and development have been a subject of study since the beginning of the 20th century with the development of classification tools for the different professions. The concept of "career development and planning" was formed from the concepts of "career choice" and "professional development" which were defined as a process in which the individual attempts to fit their skills, inclinations, and personality to the specific demands of a profession (Feldman, 1992). Holland (1985) asserts that career choice expresses the individual's personality and the application of one's personal style of communicating with one's surroundings. In Holland's theoretical approach he claims that an individual will be attracted to professions which resonate with his or her traits. Other researchers claimed that being in contact with people in other professions provides information about new possibilities as well as confirmation regarding changes the individual is hesitant about (Ebaugh & Ebaugh, 1988; Ibarra, 2004; Kunda, Barley, & Evans, 2002; Stuart & Ding, 2003). These researchers discuss the choice of a primary profession. The current study deals with the phenomenon of people who are already engineers, lawyers, and so on, choosing nursing specifically as a second career.

In summary, the conceptual framework is used to assess the phenomenon of working academic graduates quitting their jobs and going back to study and succeed in nursing school. This assessment will help predict the computability of adult students to this study program and will help identify academic graduates who possess the requisites for reconversion to nursing. As a result, more nurses will be trained and the shortage of nursing professionals around the world could be reduced. This study can be used by policy makers when planning the future of the health field as well as for researchers in other disciplines.

II. METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the considerations and the perspectives by which choices were made regarding the design of the research. The following sections provide the wider context of this research, including the considerations and the rationale that underpinned the choices made at each stage of this research.

II.1. The Research Approach

The current research aimed to develop optimized criteria to distinguish between behaviors leading to success and failure or abandonment of nursing studies as a second career.

A mixed methods research was therefore used. To scientifically validate the results the methodology conducted a triangulation of empirical methods, which include:

1. A **qualitative** method based on semi-structured interviews of applicants and students.
 - Biographical narratives and participant-as-observer observation.
2. A **quantitative** method using a closed-ended questionnaire.

Each of these methods has advantages and disadvantages:

1. The advantage of an interview, which is a continuous dialogue, is that the interviewer and interviewee can deviate from the original questions and the interviewee can express his opinion without barriers. A live interview also allows the interviewer to perceive nonverbal impressions, which include mimicry, voice, and tone, and to understand motives better. The disadvantage of an interview is that the interviewer will not always get the answers they expect. Moreover, the interviewee will sometimes try to please the interviewer and to justify being chosen as an interview subject as well as their qualifications as a candidate. Therefore, in order to minimize possible bias, students at the final stages of their studies were also interviewed.

The advantage of a narrative is that the candidate writes their innermost feelings and does not have to face another person. The individual may believe that no one will read everything they write, which will encourage them to be honest. Another advantage is that the writer unwittingly gives out hidden information, revealed when their answers are subject to later interpretation and the discovery of deeper layers of meaning. The disadvantage is that writing is calculated and not spontaneous, with the writer possibly distorting the truth for their own benefit. Participant-as-observer.

2. The advantage of a questionnaire is that it is anonymous and that candidates fill it out after already being accepted to the study program. That is, the former candidate has no reason to distort the data. In addition, when a person receives a questionnaire, they answer honestly, especially if the questionnaire is submitted anonymously, if only so that their voice as an individual will be heard and taken into consideration. The disadvantage is that if the participant is not interested in fully reading the questions or if they do not have the time, they may not take the questionnaire seriously or answer arbitrarily without reading the questions. Some questions may be emotionally difficult or may conflict with the student's values and worldview. In this case, the student will try answer in a certain way for their own benefit and will not answer wholeheartedly (Shkedi, 2015).

II.1.1. Triangulation

Triangulation was included in this research as a strategy for receiving a rich data source for analysis. Triangulation is described as a process of obtaining information from three or more independent sources (Shkedi, 2015). This varied approach results in more trust in the findings. The objective of triangulation, then, is to overcome validity problems of qualitative research, and to cross check findings derived from qualitative and quantitative research (Bryman, 2001).

II.1.2. The Research Stages

This research employs a biphasic use of the mixed method design: the first phase entailed a qualitative observation of a limited number of participants. Using an analysis of life stories and a semi-structured interview, we aimed to understand the demand for academic reconversion for a second career. The second phase included constructing a closed-ended questionnaire and the analysis of statistical data, with the aim of ascertaining the correlation between parameters.

The justification for employing triangulation in this study is that the integration of these central paradigms helped to neutralize disadvantages and expanded the research paradigm. The qualitative method constituted the first phase of the study. It is characterized by low reliability and high validity, so it was used as a method to develop quantitative measures. The quantitative method has high reliability and low validity. By triangulation, the data can be cross-checked and verified. The multiplicity of sources allowed greater and fuller understanding of the studied phenomena and eventually resulted in the higher validity and

reliability of findings. Figure 2 illustrates a model for the application of the mixed method design.

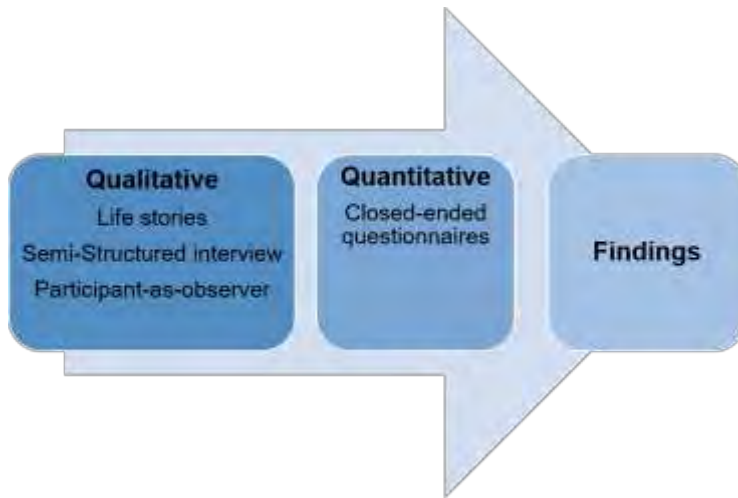


Figure 2. A model for the application of the mixed method design.

As can be seen in Figure 2, a mixed methods research is presented as a process in which qualitative methods are used to develop quantitative measures.

Table 2. The stages of the research.

	Aim	Research tool	Research population	Data analysis method
Stage 1 Qualitative	To clarify the reason why academics choose nursing as a second career and to identify behaviors acquired by the individual during the socialization process, integrated in the decision to reconvert to nursing. To understand the internal and external dispositions that motivate an individual to choose nursing as a second career.	Life stories	15 candidates of the nursing reconversion program	Content analysis
		Semi-structured interviews	7 candidates of the nursing reconversion program	
		Semi-structured interviews	7 students from the nursing reconversion program	
	To ascertain a deep understanding of their behavior, their strength, and the connection between them. While collecting varied data.	Participant-as-observer	Students from the nursing reconversion program	
Stage 2 Quantitative	To develop the profile of the student and to build criteria which will distinguish between successful behavior or academic failure.	Closed-ended questionnaires	40 Students who dropped out	Statistical analysis
			50 Students from the nursing academic program	
			70 Students from the nursing reconversion program	

III. FINDINGS

III.1. Qualitative Findings Related to Research Question 1

III.1.1. Categories Emerging from Life Stories of Candidates

The content analysis performed on the life stories of candidates aimed to answer research question 1. Figure 3 summarizes the results of the content analysis of 15 life stories from candidates for nursing reconversion programs.

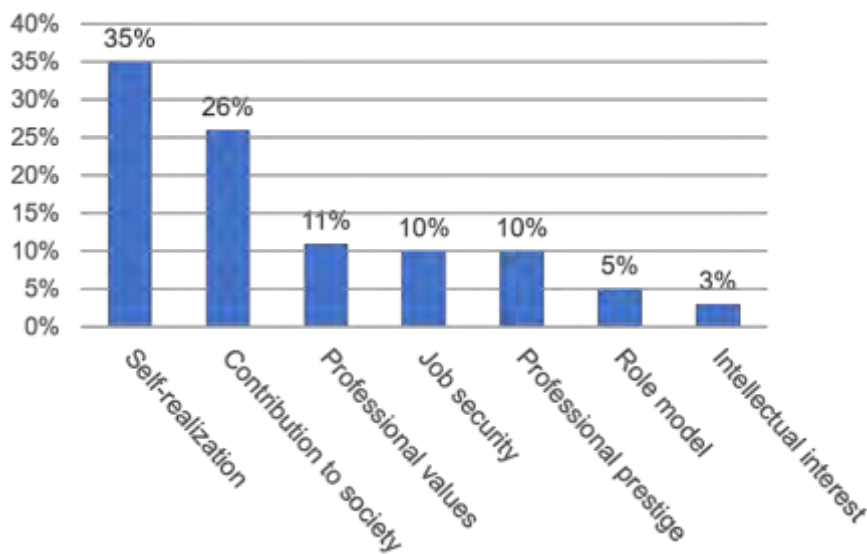


Figure 3. Categories emerging from the content analysis of 15 life stories of candidates for nursing reconversion programs.

Figure 3 depicts the frequency of categories the candidates mentioned in answering the question "Write down your biography so far and your plans for the future, and explain the reason you chose the profession of nursing." Based on the life stories of the candidates, comparing data, and identifying common meanings, seven main categories emerged. These categories were mentioned by the candidates as the reasons for reconversion to nursing as a second career. The category of **self-realization** was the most prominent reason and was mentioned by over a third of the candidates (35%). This is evident in the candidate's statement: "I aspire to grow and succeed and even to become specialized." Considering that the last generations belong to the X and Y generations, they aspire to achieve self-realization in their occupational sphere of choice. Therefore, they are active in their professional choice

and do not surrender to the pressures of the environment, which tries to dictate their way to self-realization.

III.1.2. Themes and Categories Emerging from Interviews with Candidates

The content analysis performed on the interviews with candidates aimed to answer research question 1. The information gathered from interviews with candidates brought up two main themes:

- I. The willingness to study nursing reconversion as a second career
- II. The significance attributed to the nursing profession

III.1.2.1. Theme I: Willingness to Study Nursing Reconversion as a Second Career

Table 3 presents the theme I categories emerging from the interviews with candidates.

Table 3. Theme I and categories emerging from the interviews with candidates.

Theme I	Categories	
Willingness to study nursing reconversion as a second career	Category 1	Lack of satisfaction from the former occupation
	Category 2	To contribute to society
	Category 3	Social features
	Category 4	Job Security - Retirement
	Category 5	Turning point
	Category 6	Role model
	Category 7	Lifelong learning

Category 1: *Lack of satisfaction from the former occupation.* The content analysis shows that participants (S1, F, 36), (S2, F, 36), (S3, F, 32) were not content with their former career. Evidence for this category, can be found in the answers of interviewees (S1, F, 36) *"I was not happy from my occupational past. I experienced a sense of discontent. I felt that I was doing something which is not important,"* (S2, F, 36) *"I realized I wanted something else"* and interviewee (S3, F, 32) said, *"I was looking for something that has always interested me and challenge me."*

The Willingness for choosing nursing as a second career, in these cases is derived from a sense of frustration from the former career.

III.1.2.2. Theme II: The Significance Attributed to the Nursing Profession

Table 4 presents the theme II categories emerging from the interviews with candidates.

Table 4. Theme II and categories emerging from the interviews with candidates.

Theme II	Categories	
The Significance Attributed to the Nursing Profession	Category 1	Seeking meaning in life
	Category 2	The perception of the nursing field
	Category 3	Dilemmas
	Category 4	Decision making process
	Category 5	Personal traits
	Category 6	Change of world views
	Category 7	From materialism to spirituality

Category 1: Seeking meaning in life. The meaning attributed to the nursing profession can be seen in the answers of interviewees (S1, F, 36), (S2, F, 36) and (S5, F, 36), emphasizing the emotional maturity with which they choose the profession. Interviewee (S1, F, 36) said, "I come to it from a place where I'm far more connected to myself." Connection with others gives meaning to the individual, when they act as the caregiver. Interviewee (S2, F, 36) said, "The significance is very large and important. we are doing something, in terms of help, it does not just come in, sit down, go home." and Interviewee (S5, F, 36) said the meaning attributed to the nursing profession revolves around helping people: "I want to progress in life and help people."

The candidates attribute a sacred meaning to the nursing profession. They will improve their own welfare as future professionals by giving to others and to the community, enjoying a sense of satisfaction.

III.1.3. Summary of Candidate Findings

The candidates in this sample were an average age of 29.5 years. A third were married and have children. The dominant for applying for the nursing reconversion program were intrinsic and involved long-standing nursing values of caring for others and contributing to society, which were perceived by the candidates as corresponding to their desire for self-realization. Extrinsic, work-related motives were rarely mentioned. Both of these results were evident in the interviews and also in the replies on the admission forms. Career changers reported being

unsatisfied with their previous career choices, and nursing was a realistic choice for many of them due to previous acquaintance with the field through family members in nursing and medicine in general. Most nurses view nursing positively, as an honorable, humanitarian profession.

III.2. Qualitative Findings Related to Research Questions 1 and 2

III.2.1. Themes Emerging from Interviews with Students Towards Graduation

to answer research questions 1 and 2, the content analysis of the interviewed subjects, students at the age range of 29-56 who chose to study nursing as a second career in a reconversion course, and are successful in their studies, brought up two main themes:

- I. Cultural capital and social capital as motivations to persevere in nursing reconversion as a second career
- II. Economic capital as a preservation factor for reconversion to nursing as a second career

III.2.1.1. Theme I: Cultural Capital and Social Capital as Motivations to Persevere in Nursing Reconversion as a Second Career

Table 5 presents the theme I categories emerging from the interviews with students towards graduation.

Table 5. Theme I and categories emerging from the interviews with students towards graduation.

Theme I	Categories	
Cultural capital and social capital as motivations to persevere in nursing reconversion as a second career	Category 1	Self-realization
	Category 2	Excitement
	Category 3	Social support
	Category 4	A professional challenge
	Category 5	Social influence
	Category 6	Social features

III.2.1.2. Theme I: Economic Capital as a Preservation Factor for Reconversion to Nursing as a Second Career

Table 6 presents the theme II categories emerging from the interviews with students towards graduation.

Table 6. Theme II and categories emerging from the interviews with students towards graduation.

Theme I	Categories	
Economic capital as a preservation factor for reconversion to nursing as a second career	Category 1	Better earning
	Category 2	Stable work
	Category 3	Comfortable work hours
	Category 4	Working at irregular hours
	Category 5	Promotion
	Category 6	Job security

Category 1: Better earning. The content analysis shows that participants are expected to improve their economic situation following the reconversion to nursing. One of the students who was a teacher stated that his friends told him the pay is good and that is why he chose nursing, evidence to this category can be found in the interviews. Subject (S6, F, 38) "*The pay is good.*" Also, subject (S5, F, 35), divorced with a 10-year-old who was born and went to school in Moscow. She said she never thought of becoming a nurse but the reality and difficulty of life made her choose that profession "*A career for life which pays well and is honorable.*" Subject (S3, F, 41) said "*Income... it's the safest possible.*"

III.2.2. Themes Emerging from the Student Observation

The observation took place in class, with the researcher writing down notes. There were 50 registered students in the class, 45 were present in the class on the day of the observation. The content analysis answers research question 2:

What are the conditions leading the students to success or dropout of their reconversion studies to nursing?

The information gathered from observation with students brought up three main themes:

- I. Cultural capital – norms of behavior
- II. Social capital - commitment and reciprocity

III. Cultural capital from establishing the interaction between lecturer and student

III.2.2.1. Theme I: Cultural capital – Norms of Behavior

Table 7 presents the theme I categories emerging from the student observation.

Table 7. Theme I and categories emerging from the student observation.

Theme I	Categories	
Cultural capital – norms of behavior	Category 1	Tardiness; Leaving in the middle of class
	Category 2	Restlessness due to not understanding the material; Eating during class
	Category 3	Speaking without permission
	Category 4	Using a cell phone during class
	Category 5	Nonverbal communication
	Category 6	Listening with a desire to understand

Category 1: *Tardiness; leaving in the middle of class.* The content analysis shows that participants are late to class, and go out in the middle of class. This was observed in class: the classroom door opened, and a student came in, a student left the classroom with her cellphone in hand, a pregnant student left the class as well as two other students.

Students in the retraining program have families, that is, although they are familiar with the academic framework, they have familial and occupational responsibilities.

III.2.2.2. Theme II: Social Capital – Commitment and Reciprocity

Table 8 presents the theme II categories emerging from the student observation.

Table 8. Theme II and categories emerging from the student observation.

Theme II	Categories	
Social capital – commitment and reciprocity	Category 1	Discussion among students
	Category 2	Lack of understanding among students
	Category 3	Talking among students
	Category 4	Encouraging other students to participate
	Category 5	Active writing
	Category 6	Student support

Category 1: *Discussion among students.* The content analysis shows that participants discuss amongst themselves. This was observed in class: Students consulting on the first row, the student translated the question to the students sitting next to him. While the teacher asks questions, a Russian student explains to his friends in Russian. They look at him and he explains in Russian and they nod an agreement. The students discuss the studied materials.

III.2.2.3. Theme III: Cultural Capital from Establishing the Interaction Between Lecturer and Student

Table 9 presents the theme III categories emerging from the student observation.

Table 9. Theme III and categories emerging from the student observation.

Theme III	Categories	
Cultural capital from establishing the interaction between lecturer and student	Category 1	The lecturer sets boundaries of behavior
	Category 2	The lecturer intervenes to solve disciplinary problems
	Category 3	Dialogue with the lecturer
	Category 4	Answering lecturer's questions without permission
	Category 5	Lack of student participation
	Category 6	Collaborating with the lecturer

Category 1: *The lecturer sets boundaries of behavior.* The content analysis shows that is trying to bring the attention of the students to participate in the class. This can be observed in the class: the teacher stopped the class and addressed the whole class indicating that it's very important to participate. The teacher explained that it's ok to make a mistake, and no student should grade another student. The teacher asks the students to be more patient with each other and to allow others to make mistakes, since that is a good way to internalize knowledge and reinforce it. The teacher gives the permission to make mistakes and guide the students to be patient with each other.

III.3. Quantitative Findings

III.3.1. Characteristics of the Quantitative Research Sample

The original sample included 160 respondents. However, after the exclusion of respondents who did not indicate their gender, birth place, area of residence, religion and religiousness, the sample came out to be 105 respondents with full details.

Respondents are divided into three research groups: The "normal" academic track³ group, the reversion track group, and the drop outs group. Figure 4 presents the proportion of each group in the quantitative study population.

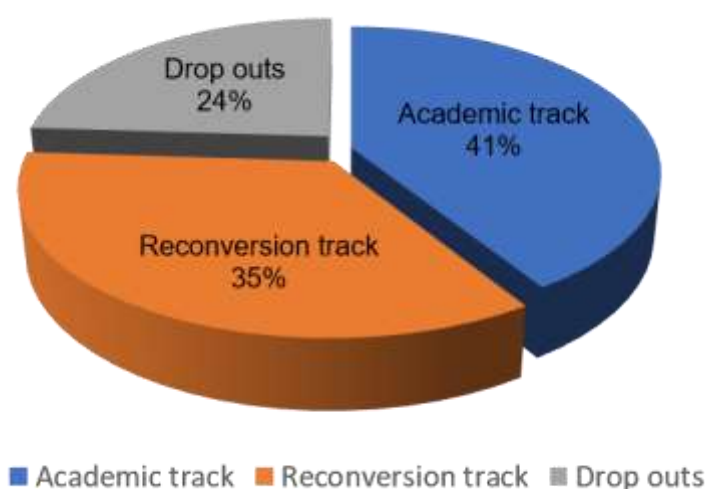


Figure 4. Proportion of each research group: The "normal" academic track group, the reversion track group, and the drop outs group.

III.3.2. Factors Influencing the Choice of Reconversion to Nursing

The research hypotheses refer to three main factors influencing the choice of the nursing profession. The first factor refers to the motivational factors for this choice. The following coordinates the scattering (averages and standard deviations) of the six motivational factors examined in this context, as they were measured in this study and the Cronbach's alpha (α) measure of the internal consistency of each factor's relevant statements.

³ Students in the 4-year academic track towards a degree in nursing – in this study it is referred to as the "normal" track.

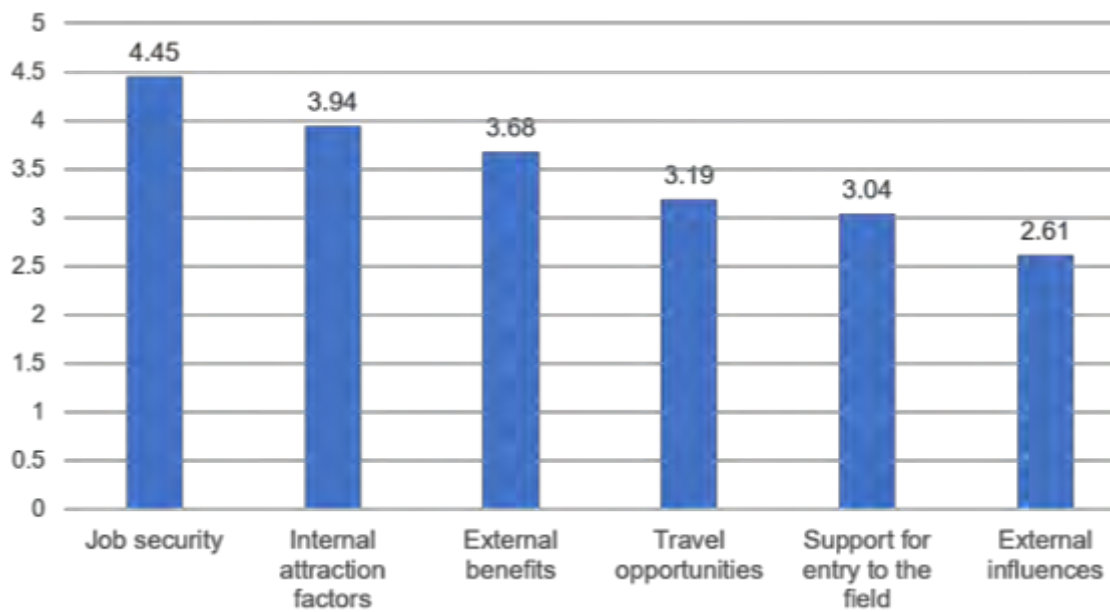


Figure 5. Factors influencing the choice of reconversion to nursing (averages).

III.4. Summary of Findings

III.4.1. Summary of Findings Emerging from Research Question 1

Internal dispositions

- Self-Realization
- Values and norms
- Socialized features
- Meaning for life
- Belonging to the public sector

External dispositions

- Role model
- Job security
- Contribution to society
- Lifelong learning

III.4.2. Summary of Findings Emerging from Research Question 2

- Social support and Relations between students
- The meaning attributed to the nursing profession
- Decision making process

III.4.3. Summary of Findings Emerging from Research Question 3

1. Willingness to succeed
2. Family support
3. Language
4. Support among class members
5. Financial grants

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

IV.1. Factual Conclusions

IV.1.1. Factual Conclusions Emerging from Research Question 1

The conclusion is that the choice to reconvert to nursing is motivated by the character traits of the student, after being externally influenced by a professional in the field. Students find in nursing reconversion the opportunity to realize their values, while finding variety within the occupation, as a result of its various specializations. This conclusion affirms the four study hypotheses, which are:

1. Students' reconversion to nursing as a result of exposure to a nurse in their close surrounding.
2. Adult students' reconversion to nursing as motivated by inner values acquired in the process of socialization.
3. Adult students' reconversion to nursing, as a result of acquired understanding of market laws, and of life experience.

4. Students' reconversion to nursing as a result of career development and advancement options.

IV.1.2. Factual Conclusions Emerging from Research Question 2

The conclusion is that succeeding in the nursing reconversion studies depends on social support from classmates and the student's close surrounding. Even though the student made a conscious choice to quit their former occupation, because of a feeling of lack of personal and financial realization, they are usually not aware of how difficult the studies that they are taking upon themselves are.

IV.1.3. Factual Conclusions Emerging from Research Question 3

The conclusion is that decreasing the rates of failure depends on social support (familial and within the classroom). This support is both emotional and financial, allowing the student to focus on the studies and to be available to it.

IV.2. Conceptual Conclusions

To reduce dropout, we recommend treating the student as a future professional who is going to reduce the shortage of staff in the system. Therefore, the student's success should be placed as the highest priority, allowing the individual to realize themselves as professionals, and the nursing administration to gain new quality professionals trained by the nursing schools.

The people registering to the nursing reconversion program are adults with previous academic education and mostly with a previous occupation. They show willingness to study a new profession, and they see their profession as a realization of their life's dream. Nevertheless, it seems they have difficulties achieving their goals and to finish their studies since the nursing reconversion program is an accelerated track, which is half as long as a regular nursing program. This acceleration aims to help reduce the shortage of nursing professionals in Israel, whose rate is now one for every 1000 citizens.

One of the goals of the Ministry of Health for 2017 is to increase the number of graduates to 3000 a year, so that in five years the rate of nursing professionals will reach 6.2 for every 1000 citizens. This accelerated track constitutes 3000 class and clinical hours in a period of 30 months studied in three to four days a week. As a result, the short and intense program makes it difficult for a large part of the students to carry out a normal family and work life. These

difficulties are expressed through significant dropout rates. 63 students out of 129 dropped out between the years 2012-2014.

This study investigates the dropout rate in the reconversion to nursing program and offers a model to decrease this rate. This model includes three parameters:

1. **Extension of study program** – to extend the study period from 30 months to 36 months. This extension will enable the student to study 2-3 days a week instead of 3-4 days a week. This will enable the student to devote more time to their family, to be present at home, to have more time to study and even to work more than a half-time position and help provide for the family.
2. **Custom tailored program** – to build a custom-tailored program for each student according to their specific needs. There is no set schedule, but the students choose their preferred schedule according to predetermined options.
3. **Financial support** – State funded support for nursing students to alleviate their living costs and the costs of the academic studies. This support will be conditioned with a commitment to work for four years in a governmental framework.

Figure 6 presents the proposed model for decreasing the dropout rates and increasing the number of graduates in reconversion to nursing studies.

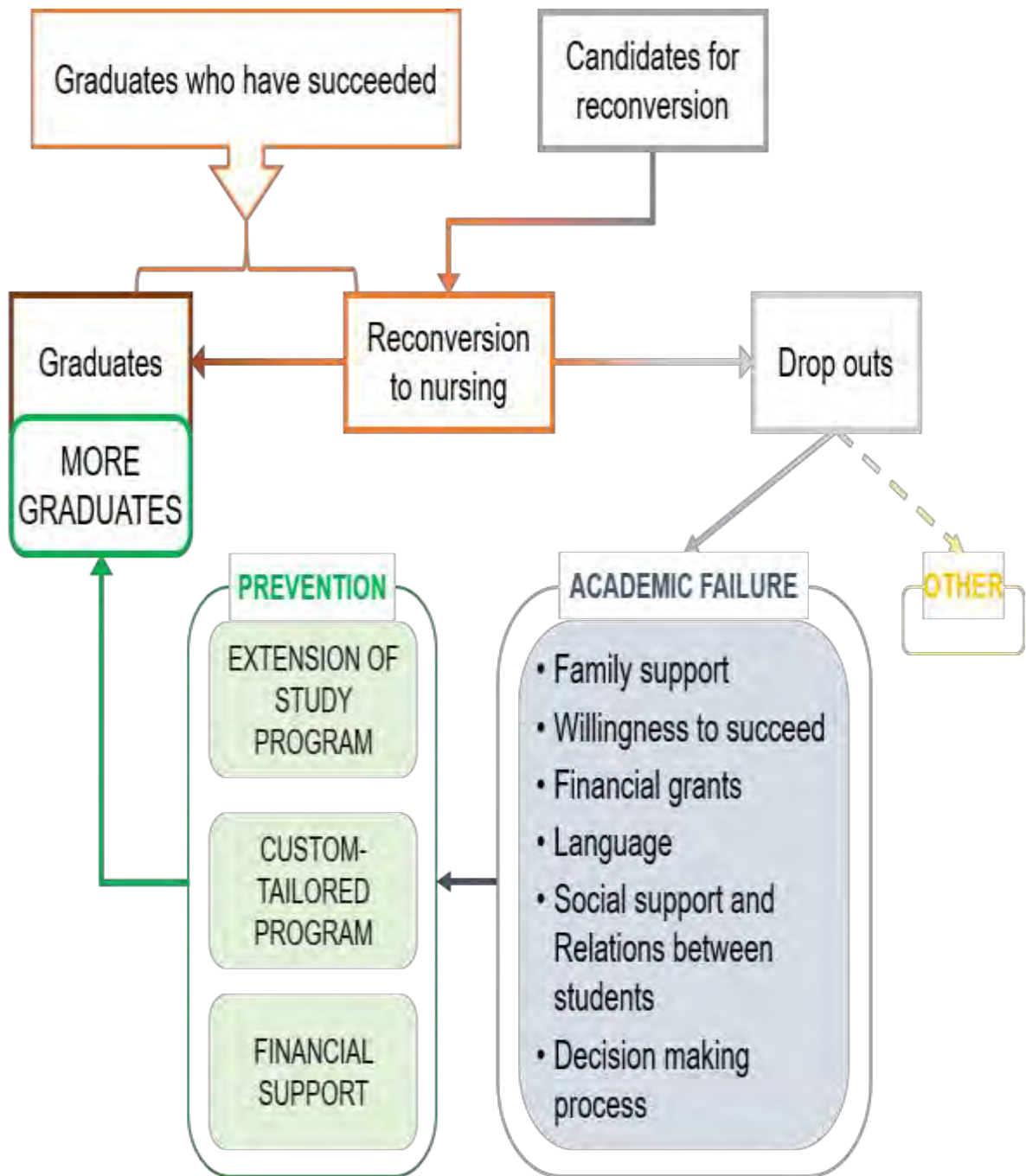


Figure 6. The proposed model.

This model describes three options that can reduce dropouts as a result of failure in studies in the nursing reconversion program. In this way the number of graduates could be increased. To carry out this model there is a need for systemic flexibility and to avoid the delimitation of the study period. The model places the student in the center throughout the training program and enables the student to be a part of one of the offered programs. Figure 7 presents the custom-tailored program.

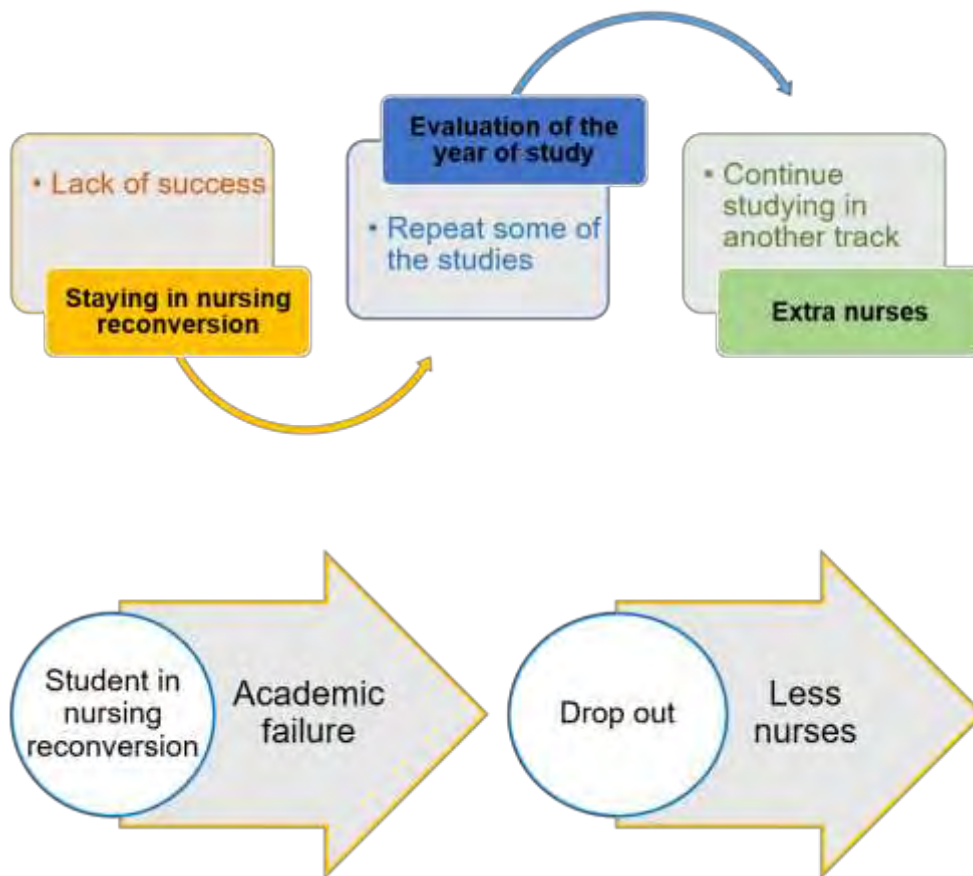


Figure 7. Custom-tailored program.

Figure 7 describes the new way to gain new nurses, and the guidance of the nursing administration that causes the loss of nurses.

IV.3. Practical Implications and Recommendations

The goal of this study was to present a model to decrease the shortage of nursing professionals in Israel. The model that was presented proposes a change of policy and a level of flexibility to allow forming an individually tailored program adapted to each student's circumstances, enabling students to succeed on their terms. In this way the student in the reconversion program could continue leading a normal way of life, while fulfilling their familial and financial obligations.

Recommendations

1. To place the reconversion student in the center by providing a custom-tailored reconversion program.

2. To change the policy of the nursing administration (a part of the Ministry of Health). One of its many tasks is to develop and train nursing professionals. Since training takes place in nursing schools approved by this administration, it influences the nursing schools and can outline a national guideline for increased flexibility in the programs.
3. To extend the study period with no additional cost.
4. To provide an option to study without tuition.

IV.4. Contribution to Knowledge

IV.4.1. Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge

The contribution to theoretical knowledge is in the context of the dropouts from the reconversion programs from a sociological perspective. A model was developed to **decrease the dropout rates**. The model was created specifically for this study. This model is original and innovative and contributes to knowledge in the field of nursing reconversion for a second career. The model allows not only to save economic resources for the school, but also allows the reconversion students to fulfill their dream of becoming a nurse. This will serve the international and national need for nurses, and allow us to narrow the gap in the need for nurses, because of the potential rising number of graduates.

IV.4.2. Contribution to Practical Knowledge

The model developed from this study contributes to practical knowledge. The model is modular, and enables the redeployment of the reconversion program, with the adult student in the center. This makes several programs possible at the same time (the economic advantage to the institute is understood since each professor teaches more students in every classroom). The students choose the program most suitable for their personal requirements, leading to a decline in dropout rates and more graduates. Therefore, the model can help different disciplines of retraining academics to prevent drop out. An additional contribution to practical knowledge is in the structure of training, by separating the theoretical studies from the clinical studies, and conducting the clinical studies towards a successful conclusion of the theoretical studies. Therefore, the student will become responsible for their own success and will be able

to create a suitable timeframe in which to finish nursing studies according to his/her lifestyle and his/her satisfaction.

IV.5. Further Research

Some suggestions for further research include:

1. A study to examine the required time frame to finish studies in the reconversion program, so that dropout will not be a result of failure in studies.
2. A longitudinal study to examine the phenomenon of dropouts from the nursing reconversion program, based on the suggested plan.
3. A study to examine the effect of external funding on the probabilities of success and failure in the nursing reconversion program.

IV.6. Recommendation for Change

1. To develop a guideline for the coordinator to initiate a one on one talk with each student once a quarter to understand how they feel in the study program and how they get along with their classmates and the study materials.
2. To invite students who failed in an exam for a one on one talk to warn them of the risk of dropout.
3. To provide budget and support to extend instruction methods to adapt to each of the students, so each student can connect in their own unique way.
4. To allocate budget to the nursing administration to assist students who have financial difficulties during the study period.
5. To provide additional instruction in all subjects in order to reinforce the students' knowledge.
6. Each student should be able to set their own schedule for finishing the program.

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