

A STUDY OF DROPOUTS IN FIVE SCHOOLS

OF PRACTICAL NURSING IN OREGON

1960 - 1965

by

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A THESIS

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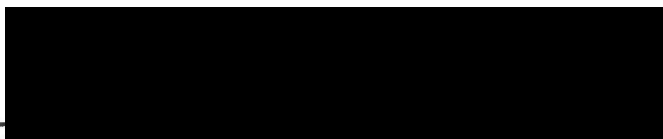
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

The growth and development of the practical nurse movement in the past twenty years has been without precedent. The approximate numbers graduated from approved schools in the United States has increased from less than 500 in 1945 to over 15,000 in 1962.⁽¹⁾

Federal support of practical nursing education under the Health Amendment Act of 1956 and, more recently, the Area Development of 1961 and the Manpower Development Training Act (MDTA) of 1962, has contributed to the continued growth of practical nursing programs. In 1961-1962 there was an increase of 46 schools, bringing the total to 739 programs. More than half of these programs are controlled administratively by state and local boards of vocational education.⁽¹⁾

Schools have been increasing in number to meet community needs as the practical nurse has become an integral of the health team. Oregon now has ten schools and had 2,359 licensed practical nurses as of 1964.⁽²⁾ The community need for more nursing personnel is apparent and indications are that the number of practical nurses will continue to increase.

There are certain underlying assumptions in the selection of applicants for enrollment in schools of practical nursing. The criteria for the selection policies are based on the overall educational patterns

which would enable the person selected successfully to complete the practical nurse program. In addition, there are criteria based on interest in nursing and personality traits which are essential to on-the-job success. Prediction of success is only possible when related factors have been identified and a reliable relationship established between them.

The major goal of the initial interview is to find out as much as possible about the personality of the applicant. Candidates present only one facet of their personality at an interview session, so prediction of success or failure, as the result of one interview, becomes extremely hazardous. It has been found that pooled independent judgment of three interviewers was a better predictor of success or failure. It has not always been possible to have more than one interviewer present for the initial interview, but other interviews have been arranged when acceptance of a student was in doubt. (17)

Practical nurse programs have been advised by the National League for Nursing to have admissions committees that participate both in determining requirements for admission and in selection of students. Admission requirements should be based on careful study of the characteristics necessary for the successful completion of the program and successful performance after graduation. Among the characteristics related to such success are general ability, academic achievement, physical and emotional health, and personality qualities. The assessment of these characteristics involves the use of previous academic records, report of physical examination, interviews and standardized tests. (18) Each school in Oregon is responsible for tests selected and

administered. Such tests constitute only one of the selection tools used by the Oregon practical nursing programs. An interview, plus academic records, personal references, and physical examination reports are the deciding factors in the decision of the admissions committees. (3,6,24,26)

The number of students selected varies according to the location of the school, availability of facilities for training the student, and availability of future employment.

Existing schools of practical nursing report a dropout and failure rate varying from 20-40% among their students. (15) When a student withdraws during the course of a one year program, she cannot be replaced until a new class is admitted to the school. Effort, time, and expense are involved with every failure. In addition, the failure of those on probation could require more faculty time than is spent with the successful student.

Statement of the Problem

This study is an analysis of the dropouts of five schools of practical nursing in Oregon to ascertain the percentage of dropouts and to seek to determine any like factors which contribute to withdrawal.

The study seeks to obtain responses to the following questions as the basis for determining the relationship, if any, to the incidence of withdrawal:

1. What admission interviewing techniques and acceptance policies are used by each school?
2. What was the previous academic preparation, work experience, and marital status of each student who withdrew?

3. In what age group was the highest incidence of withdrawal?

Significance of the Study

There have been many studies of withdrawals from schools of nursing, but little has been written regarding withdrawals from practical nurse programs. Since the practical nurse programs participating in this study are conducted under the auspices of the public school system where withdrawals are designated as "dropouts", the latter term has been employed throughout this study. Dropouts are expensive in time, energy, and money, both to the student and to the school. The resultant sense of failure may be devastating to the learner. The size of classes may be limited on admission, hence the importance of selecting those most likely to succeed in practical nursing becomes apparent.

Nothing in the literature indicates whether dropouts could be decreased or if factors could be determined which would specifically and significantly decrease withdrawals. Since 1951 the withdrawal rate has continued to range between 32 and 33 per cent.⁽¹⁾

No study has been made of the dropouts in the schools of practical nursing in Oregon. Determination of dropout rate, reasons for withdrawal, and relationship, if any, of admissions policies and procedures to withdrawal, have not been investigated. It is hoped that the results of this study may provide data helpful in decreasing the number of Oregon withdrawals and in maintaining the school at the highest possible educational level.

Assumptions

For the purposes of this study, it was assumed that:

1. the schools selected for the study were a representative sample of practical nurse schools;
2. the data obtained may be generalized to include the broader population of the ten Oregon schools of practical nursing.

Limitations

This study was limited to data obtained from five Oregon schools of practical nursing which had been in continuous operation from 1960 to 1965.

It was further limited to data obtained through structured interviews with the five directors of these schools and from school records of the seventy-seven students who withdrew from these schools between 1960 - 1965.

It was limited to data collected between October and December, 1965.

Definitions

The following definitions are pertinent to the purposes of this study:

1. School of Practical Nursing prepares students for licensure to practice practical nursing. The program is usually twelve months in length.

2. Dropouts refer to those who withdrew from the school of practical nursing.

Procedures of the Study

The design for this study included the following steps:

1. The literature was reviewed to establish a frame of reference.
2. The purposes of the study were established.
3. An interview guide (Appendix A) was constructed as the data collecting tool.
4. Revisions were made to include the suggestions offered by a group of experienced registered nurses for obtaining a more comprehensive analysis.
5. Using this guide, two pilot studies were conducted.
6. The first pilot study proved to be in a setting so completely atypical that a second pilot study was done. The findings of the pilot studies have not been included in the main study.
7. The tool seemed adequate and no further revisions were necessary.
8. It was decided to study only schools that had been in operation

for a five-year period. This time span was determined arbitrarily to assure a period of investigation of sufficient length to elicit meaningful data.

9. A visit to the State Board of Nursing determined that six schools of practical nursing in Oregon had been in continuous existence for the years 1960-1965. Since one school was atypical, only five of the six schools of practical nursing were used in this study.

10. The directors of the five schools of practical nursing were contacted by telephone. The purpose of the study was explained and a mutually agreeable time was arranged for the interview.

11. Permission was obtained from the directors to secure necessary information from student records.

12. The directors of the five schools of practical nursing in Oregon were interviewed and necessary information was secured from student records.

13. Data obtained by the interview were recorded on master tabulation sheets (Appendix B).

14. The data were interpreted, tables constructed and the study reported (Chapter III).

15. The findings were summarized, conclusions drawn, and recommendations made for further studies (Chapter IV).

Overview of the Study

Chapter I has consisted of an introduction to the problem, a statement of the problem, the significance of the problem, the assumptions and limitations of the study, definitions which were pertinent to the study, and the procedure for the study.

In Chapter II a review of the literature and a related study is presented. Chapter III presents the methodology, report of the study, and interpretation of the findings. Chapter IV contains the summary, conclusions and recommendations that were drawn from the findings of this study.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The main objective of this study is to examine the explanations that have been offered to account for the dropouts from schools of practical nursing. For this reason the review of the literature regarding withdrawals from schools of practical nursing includes studies pertinent to the following areas: (1) attrition in schools of nursing; (2) assessment of students for schools of practical nursing; (3) factors which have been found to contribute to withdrawals in schools of practical nursing.

Attrition in Schools of Nursing

A statistical study reported by Barbara Tate in 1961 showed that attrition rates in schools of nursing, including diploma, associate degree, baccalaureate and masters, have remained comparatively steady. The report obtained only numerical data according to program in which student was enrolled and did not consider reasons for the withdrawal. (29)

Subsequent studies reported a wide variety of reasons for withdrawal. Hill, et al in Nursing Outlook in 1963 summarized the most frequently mentioned.

These reasons ranked in importance or frequency across the schools studied are as follows:

failure in class work, marriage, dislike of nursing, ill health, unsuitable personality, disappointment in nursing, failure in practical work, violation of rules (dismissal), transfer to or preference for another school or field; homesickness, family responsibility, personal reasons, financial reasons, and immaturity.(9)

This study also stated that 75 per cent of failures can be eliminated by rigid adherence to cut off scores at time of admission. The success of any test battery may vary from class to class or from school to school, so each should examine dropout problems in their own setting. In selecting students for academic success, standardized pre-nursing tests and high school grades are, at the present time, generally the best predictors.(8,14)

Tate clearly shows the psychological and financial cost to the individual in terms of lost time, effort, personal disappointment and frustration rising out of an unsuccessful experience.(29)

Each student who fails is a financial liability to the school as well for "In this day of increased cost, it is important to all to have as many students as possible complete the program in which they enroll."(29)

Assessment of Students for Schools of Practical Nursing

Meadow reported in Nursing Research, Summer 1964 issue, on a research project conducted in Shapero School (a program in practical nursing in Sinai Hospital in Detroit) between September 1957 and March 1959. The project included five different entering classes with a population of 244 female students. The study was designed to investigate a variety of selection techniques and their effectiveness in

predicting academic success and on-the-job success of a selected group of students in a school of practical nursing.

In an introduction to the problem Meadow stated:

The problem becomes magnified when a large number of students apply for a limited number of openings. The school must of necessity establish, on a planned or arbitrary basis, some kind of selection program. (14)

Three standardized tests were used in this study by Meadow. They were: (1) National League for Nursing Pre-Admission Classification test (PACE); (2) General Aptitude Test Battery of the United States Employment Service; (3) Psychological Corporation Pre-Entrance Examination. Little evidence was found to support any successful combination of test usage.

In the same study Meadow also used the Strong Vocational Interest Blank to determine a pattern of interest differences found in practical nurse students as compared to professional nurse students. A definite pattern of interests was found among the students differing from the pattern of interests of "women-in-general" and from registered nurses. An interesting finding was that a characteristic pattern of "interest in nurse" was true for both the graduates and the failures.

In addition to the above instruments used, data for this study were obtained from student applications and interviews with selected dropouts. The interview sought to obtain as much information as possible about the personality of the applicant. Some selection committees tend to emphasize academic ability and give little attention to the importance of emotional stability. In this project the interviewers were carefully trained to be alert to indications of emotional instability.

The major finding of the study was:

...that combinations of predictor variables were found that could predict fairly accurately theory grades, achievement test and state board examination scores. Multiple correlations ranging from .46 to .81 were obtained. The most important of the 27 predictor variables was the composite score of the National League for Nursing Pre-Admission and Classification Test. It had high significant correlations with five of the seven criteria measures. Age, marital status, previous nursing experience, and educational level also contributed to the prediction of success.(14)

One of the most important unresolved problems of this study was the inability to predict which students would graduate and which would fail or withdraw. It was reported that more accurate measuring tools were needed.(14)

The study by Meadow confirmed what is already known, specifically that maturity and intelligence contribute to successful job performance.

Nursing Research, Spring 1965 issue, published a study by Sternlicht and Cavallo, Screening Techniques in the Selection of Practical Nursing Candidates. This is a study of the applicants to the School of Practical Nursing located at Willowbrook State School, which is administered and financed by the New York State Department of Mental Hygiene. The pre-admission entrance variable employed by the Willowbrook School for Practical Nursing found that "poor predictors" of success were chronological age, personality factors, and most of the subtests of Practical Nurse Entrance Examinations (PCEE). The subtests of PCEE found to have significant predictive accuracy were Verbal Ability, Academic Ability and Congeniality and Household Information.

The conclusions of the Sternlicht and Cavallo study were based on

a restricted population as recruitment was restricted to attendants who had been employed in a State school for at least one year. "The results indicated that the prognostically significant variables comprised length of previous employment as an attendant, verbal ability, academic ability, and congeniality." (29)

No generalizations can be drawn from such a restricted study. It would be interesting to determine if a larger study would yield the same findings.

The National League for Nursing published in the August 1961 issue of Nursing Outlook an article, "How to Choose Pre-Admission Tests." Practical nurse programs were advised to have admission committees that would determine requirements for selection and admission of students. The National League for Nursing further advised careful study of characteristics necessary for successful completion of the program and for performance after graduation. "Among characteristics related to such success are general ability, academic achievement, physical and emotional health and personality qualities." (19) The assessment of such characteristics will involve the use of previous academic records, physical examination, interviews and standardized tests.

Factors Contributory to Withdrawals

Many factors have been investigated in order to study their relationship to school and job success. Meadow and Edelson found that age and marital status appear to be important factors in the prediction of academic success in practical nursing. "Other factors being equal it

implies that the older students may be slightly better risks than the younger students for admission to schools of practical nursing." (15)

McElweath in "Success Factors in Practical Nursing" concluded that many of the young students drop out because of academic failure or lack of interest, whereas the older student, though slower academically, succeeds because of interest in, and understanding of, people. Further, it was concluded that the older student is happy to be useful and needed in practical nursing. (12)

Rowan compared the scholastic achievements of older students and younger students in a school of practical nursing. She found that the older students with less formal education ranked higher in class than younger students with more formal education. (22)

Grubbs reported on a study analyzing students' class rank as affected by such home responsibilities as dependent children, aged parents, or illness of a spouse who was unable to work. She found that students with home responsibilities ranked higher in the class than did the students who had no such responsibility. (7)

Meadow and Edelson studied family occupational background and previous work experience and their relationship to success in practical nursing. This study, reported in Nursing Outlook in 1963, concluded that non-nursing experience prior to admission is not nearly so important as work experience in jobs related to nursing. Such work experience may be indicative of interest and motivation in nursing.

The family occupational pattern had relatively little influence on the students' choice of practical nursing. (16)

Related Study

Layton did a study of dropouts at the Indianapolis School of Practical Nursing showing the need for careful selection of students. The study was made by comparing, in retrospect, on a yearly basis, all classes admitted to the school from 1950-1957. Such factors as age, marital status, family responsibility, race, sex, and education were studied. She obtained no significant correlation between the completion of the program and such factors. She concluded that improved selection and counseling procedures could cut down on the number of dropouts. The records of those who graduated and those who became dropouts were used in the study. Those who graduated had a median IQ of 92.8 as compared to 85.6 for dropouts. Educationally there was little difference, as years of schooling for the graduates averaged 10.99 years as compared to 10.67 years for the dropouts.

It became evident that more careful selection of students could cut down the high percentage of students leaving because of low scholarship or poor work when it was found that 26.6% left for this reason.(10)

Summary

The review of the related literature has attempted to give a background for the study of dropouts in the Oregon schools of practical nursing.

There is much in the literature that evaluates the tools used for measuring predictability of success or failure in nursing, and most agree that the need is for more accurate measuring tools. Meadow, Tate,

Hill, et al agree that the tests selected to be used should meet the needs in their particular setting.

There has been little published about the incidence of dropouts from schools of practical nursing. The one related study did conclude that more careful selection of students was essential.

There have been many factors studied which contribute to job success in practical nursing but little objective evidence on the vocational and educational significance of personality factors.

Chapter II has reviewed the related literature. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

REPORT OF THE STUDY

Design of the Study

Purpose of the study.-- No study has been made of the dropouts in the schools of practical nursing in Oregon. Determination of dropout rate, reasons for withdrawal, and relationship, if any, of admission policies and procedures to withdrawal, have not been investigated. This study was undertaken to determine the percentage of dropouts in five schools of practical nursing in Oregon. Further, it was designed to seek to ascertain any like factors which may contribute to withdrawals.

Development of the tool.-- An interview guide (Appendix A) with two major parts was constructed. Part I was to be used to obtain information from the director or supervisor of the school of practical nursing about school policies; admission procedures; admission committee and faculty opinion about the dropout problem as to time and effort expended. It also sought to determine the point in the program at which the dropouts occurred. Part II was used to secure information from the records of students who had withdrawn from the program and the reasons given for the withdrawal.

Pilot study.-- The director of a private, church supported school of practical nursing was interviewed, but due to individual policies

about housing and admission policies it was decided that a more closely related public, tax supported school would give a better evaluation of the tool. This was done, and as the tool seemed adequate no revisions of the tool seemed necessary.

Procedure for collection of the data.— A visit to the State Board of Nursing was used to determine which schools of practical nursing in Oregon had been in continuous session from 1960-1965. This time span had been determined arbitrarily to assure sufficient data to be meaningful.

The five schools studied were similar in that they are all public, tax supported programs conducted under jurisdiction of their respective school districts in vocational educational departments. A sixth school had also been in operation during the above time span but was eliminated because it differed from the others by admitting three classes annually and also because the interviewer had been a member of the school faculty for three years previous to admission to graduate study at the University of Oregon School of Nursing.

The directors of the five schools of practical nursing were contacted by telephone. The purpose of the study was explained and a mutually agreeable time was arranged for the interview. Permission was also obtained to secure necessary information from student records.

For purposes of this study the schools will be referred to in the order interviewed as A, B, C, D, and E.

Geographic location of the schools made for interesting and informative trips by air, bus and automobile for the interviewer. One school, due to geographic location, was the hub of three community hospitals

which were used for students' clinical experience. The students traveled great distances during the pre-clinical period to the centrally located school. The director of this school supervised the program by weekly visits to each facility used in the program for clinical experience.

The interviewer obtained the needed information from the supervisor about the school of practical nursing, its policies and procedures. The information about the withdrawals was obtained from the students' records. The information from the student records was given by the director in four of the five schools. In one, the interviewer was given free access to the student records while the supervisor conducted regular classes. However, in all schools, the interviewer was given all asked for information from the records. One school's records were incomplete as no cumulative record was kept on those who withdrew. The instructor's class book served as the only means of knowing academic and clinical achievement, time and reason for withdrawal.

The data were tabulated on master tabulation sheets. (Appendix B)

Findings of the Study

Information regarding dropouts from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing is presented in the same sequence as the items in the interview guide.

PART I. The number of admissions and dropouts were determined for the five schools for the years 1960-1965 and are listed in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1. Student Admissions to Five Schools of Practical Nursing in Oregon for the Years 1960 - 1965.

Year	Number of Admissions per School					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1960-1	23	17	16	13	8	77
1961-2	24	18	13	18	15	88
1962-3	21	16	26	17	15	95
1963-4	22	16	30	17	13	98
1964-5	<u>20</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>16</u>	<u>94</u>
Total	110	85	108	82	67	452

Table 2. Student Dropouts from Five Schools of Practical Nursing in Oregon for the Years 1960 - 1965.

Year	Number of Dropouts per School					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
1960-1	5	2	2	4	1	14
1961-2	3	1	3	7	1	15
1962-3	1	1	6	4	2	14
1963-4	3	1	7	2	3	16
1964-5	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>18</u>
Total	14	6	22	25	10	77

In analyzing the admission and dropout data obtained, the mean percentage dropout rates for the five Oregon schools of practical nursing studied was found to be below the national rate as determined by Meadow⁽¹⁴⁾ and The National League for Nursing studies.^(1,2) The dropout percentage mean for the years 1960-1965 in the five Oregon schools was 17.3% as compared to Meadow's dropout percentage mean of 29.1% for the years 1957-1959 in the Shapero School in Detroit.

The percentage dropout rate for School D is consistently higher than the other four schools studied. While this was not the concern of the study, the director did state that the school had had no state board failures, which leads to the conjecture that a higher academic standard may be required and that non-achievers are not permitted to graduate.

The percentage dropout rate annual means for each of the five Oregon schools of practical nursing studied are presented in Figure 1.

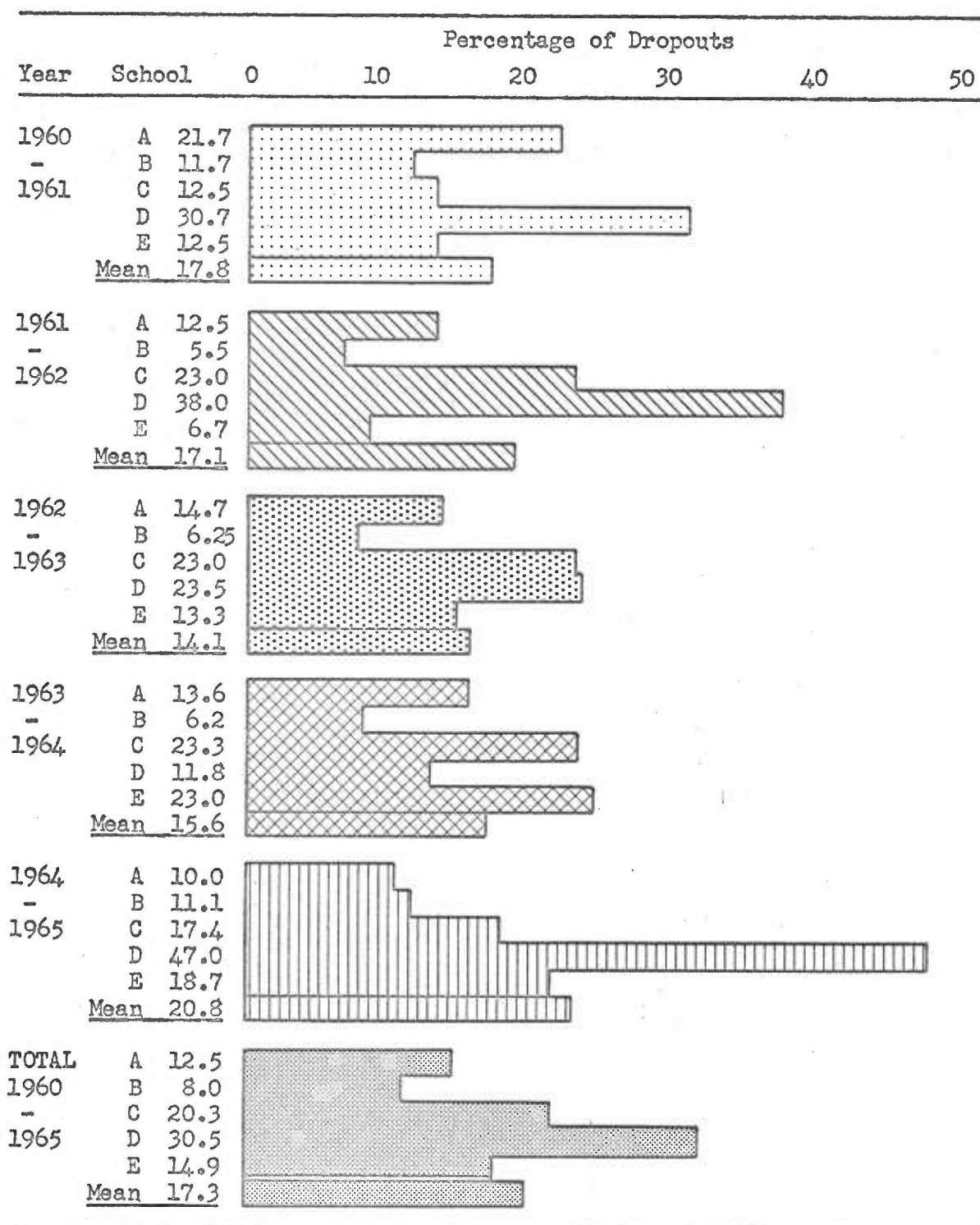


Figure 1. The Yearly Percentage of Dropouts in Each of Five Schools of Practical Nursing in Oregon for the Years 1960 - 1965 and the Total for the Years 1960 - 1965.

Item C of Part I asked: "What are your admission policies?"

It was common to all to require the following: (1) be age seventeen at time of application; (2) the upper age limit to be dependent upon individual qualifications; (3) be a high school graduate or have an achievement of equivalency determined by the General Education Development Test; (4) be of good moral character and personal traits as evidenced by three personal references; (5) have good physical and mental health evidenced by medical doctor's report of physical examination. (3,6,24,26) Two schools had an additional admission policy requiring that weight be in proportion to height. (25,26) These were considered basic requirements for admission to Oregon practical nurse programs and for subsequent licensure to practice nursing.

Item D of Part I, which sought information re procedures used in the admission of students, was divided into four sections. The first section was to determine what pre-admission tests were used. All but one of the five Oregon schools of practical nursing studied used some pre-admission tests. The directors of the four schools were in agreement with De Lano, (4) Heslin, (8) McElweath, (12) and Meadow (14) that there are still unsolved problems and misunderstandings about testing, but properly administered and interpreted by qualified experts, tests can help to obtain more accurately selected students. The interpretation of the tests used in the Oregon schools is done by the school district's special education department. Each school of practical nursing determined the adequate score which they felt qualified the applicant for admission to their program. The tests used are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Pre-Admission Tests Used by Five Schools of Practical Nursing in Oregon for the Years 1960 - 1965

Tests	Number of Schools Using
(1)	(2)
California Psychiatric Testing	1
Henmon-Nelson	1
Otis-Guick Scoring Mental Ability	3
Comprehensive Reading and English	2
Comprehensive Test for Prospective Nurses	1

Section 2 of the question, "What procedures are used in the admission of students?" was concerned with the interview of the applicant. The interviewing in Schools A, D and E was conducted by the director of the school of practical nursing; by the nurse supervisor or coordinator in A, B, C and D. The schools of practical nursing studied are administered by the director of vocational education. In School E the director of the school evaluated all high school transcripts or General Education Development certificates before the nurse supervisor of the program saw the applicant for the admission interview. School D, in one evening, used two teams of interviewers for interviewing all who had made application for entrance into the annual class. Team one secured information about familial approval, social activity, appearance, transportation, finances, and then wrote recommendations and

impressions. Team two sought to identify personality traits and emotional stability as well as the applicant's acceptance of school policy. The interviewer then wrote recommendations and impressions. This interviewing technique was unique, but the school administration felt that the pooled judgment of six interviewers was more predictive of success. Meadow and Gass⁽¹⁷⁾ supported this judgment but the technique of interviewing differed.

Each of the five schools studied used a standardized form for the initial interview.

Section 3 asked, "Do you have an admissions committee?" All five schools answered that they had an admissions committee.

The responses to the question "How was the admissions committee appointed?" were varied so were categorized for purposes of tabulation. Two of the schools studied appointed three members from the advisory board, namely: a medical doctor, a registered nurse, and a licensed practical nurse. In School D the director appointed the committee from hospital administrative staff and from the school's steering committee. School A's committee of five members are appointed by the district medical association, Oregon Nurses Association and Oregon Association of Licensed Practical Nurses and are categorized in Table 4 as appointed by societal groups.

The answers given to the questions "How was the admissions committee appointed?" and "What is the committee's constituency?" are presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4. How Admissions Committees are Appointed to Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing

How Appointed (1)	Schools				
	A (2)	B (3)	C (4)	D (5)	E (6)
a. From Advisory Board			X		X
b. By Director				X	
c. Administrator of Hospital and Instructor of Practical Nursing		X			
d. Appointment by Societal Groups	X				

Table 5. Constituency of Admissions Committee for Each of the Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing and Total Membership

Constituency (1)	School				
	A (2)	B (3)	C (4)	D (5)	E (6)
Directors of School and/or Administrator of Hospitals	1	3	1	2	
Registered Nurse	1	1	1	2	1
Licensed Practical Nurse	1		1		1
Doctor from Oregon Medical Association	1				1
Lay People from Community Organizations	1		1	2	
Total Membership	5	4	4	6	3

Section 4 of admission procedures asked what explanation is given to the student about cost, number of hours in school per day or week, number of hours spent in the hospital per day or week, clinical facilities used, housing, transportation, and vacation. Schools A, C and D used facts sheets given to each applicant at the time of application for admission. School D used a brochure in addition to the facts sheet. Schools B and E used brochures dispensed to each applicant who applied for or inquired about admission to the school. All schools gave additional explanation during the initial interview.

In summarizing, the findings of the procedures used in admission of students to the five schools of practical nursing in Oregon indicate an awareness of the importance of an effective selection of students who had qualifications necessary to complete satisfactorily the practical nurse program.

The Pre-Admission and Classification Examination, which has been reported by NLN in 1954 and by Heslin and Katzell in 1962⁽⁸⁾ to have a positive relationship to achievement, was not used by the five Oregon schools of practical nursing. School A used a psychological test to assess personality as a success predictor. Comments from the directors seemed to indicate that emphasis was placed on motivation or desire of applicant to do "nursing" and that academic failure has many times been due to acceptance of an applicant who was slightly below standards set by school policy. Tate⁽²⁹⁾ stressed that rigid adherence to cut off score was a means of eliminating about 75% of withdrawals.

Response to Item E, "What counseling services are used?" showed that counseling services of the school district were used in Schools A

and B. Community counseling services such as family counseling and child guidance were used by Schools B and E. All five schools studied used faculty members as counselors for students unless the problem was outside of the school's scope of activity or capability.

Item F, "Which students require the most faculty time?", obtained varied answers. One director felt the high achiever (A-B) required more time due to curiosity. Three directors felt that the low achiever (D-F) required more faculty time and effort; but one felt that the student with emotional problems, irrespective of academic achievement, required the greatest amount of faculty time. Meadow reported that it was the feeling of those interviewing dropouts, for whom there was no apparent reason for academic failure, that it was quite conceivable that intellectual functioning was blocked by emotional difficulty.⁽¹⁴⁾ This, like faculty time of this study, has not been verified so remains an impression.

Item G asked, "Do you have more dropouts in the younger student, age 17-20, than in the older, more mature students?" School A responded "no" but all others responded "yes." When asked if they let this limit enrollment of this age group, all except School E responded "no."

The findings indicated that all recognized the fact that has been substantiated in studies by Grubb⁽⁷⁾ and Rowan⁽²²⁾ that in programs of practical nursing the older student with less formal education and more home responsibility ranked higher in classes. Vocational education under public school systems cannot discriminate against any one group. Thus, even the director who answered "yes" to limiting enrollment qualified his "yes" by stating that limiting the size of the class led

to the selection of the more mature, academically qualified older women. For this reason, although all recognize the high incidence of dropout in the younger age group, school policy does not permit rejection of applicants for this reason if they are otherwise qualified.

To Item H, "At what point in the program do you have the greatest number of dropouts?", all except School E responded that dropouts occurred most frequently in the pre-clinical period or in the first three months. The director of School E felt that each student should be given the opportunity to exhibit use of technical skills in the hospital environment. Since the first clinical area was medical-surgical area, it was here that School E had the greatest incidence of withdrawal.

Some of the comments of the interviewees to questions asked relevant to admission procedures and faculty time spent with students are here quoted verbatim:

Motivation for nursing considered on admission to program not GPA.

Size of high school class and rank in class is important in reviewing high school transcript not GPA alone.

Lack of testing and pressure to enroll more students caused increase in dropouts.

Group dynamics used - low grades are known to the group and decision to drop from the class, due to low grades, is made easier.

Excessive faculty time spent not always due to poor student achievement in the clinical area.

PART II. Information from student records of the seventy-seven students who had withdrawn from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing for the years 1960-65 studied factors of age, marital status, previous educational experience, previous work experience, and academic and clinical experience.

Age.-- The records showed that 34 of the 77 dropouts were in the 17-20 year age range with a median age range of dropouts as 27-28 years. Figure 2 shows the percentage dropout rate by age in the five Oregon schools of practical nursing studied. However, though the figure shows a preponderance of dropouts in the 17-20 year age group, no attempt was made in this study to ascertain the percentage admission in this age range for the years 1960-1965. A study done comparing number of admissions and number of dropouts in a given age range might present a very different figure. This was not investigated, so it remains a supposition. Figure 2 does seem to indicate that those from 21-41 years of age are more likely to complete successfully the practical nurse program.

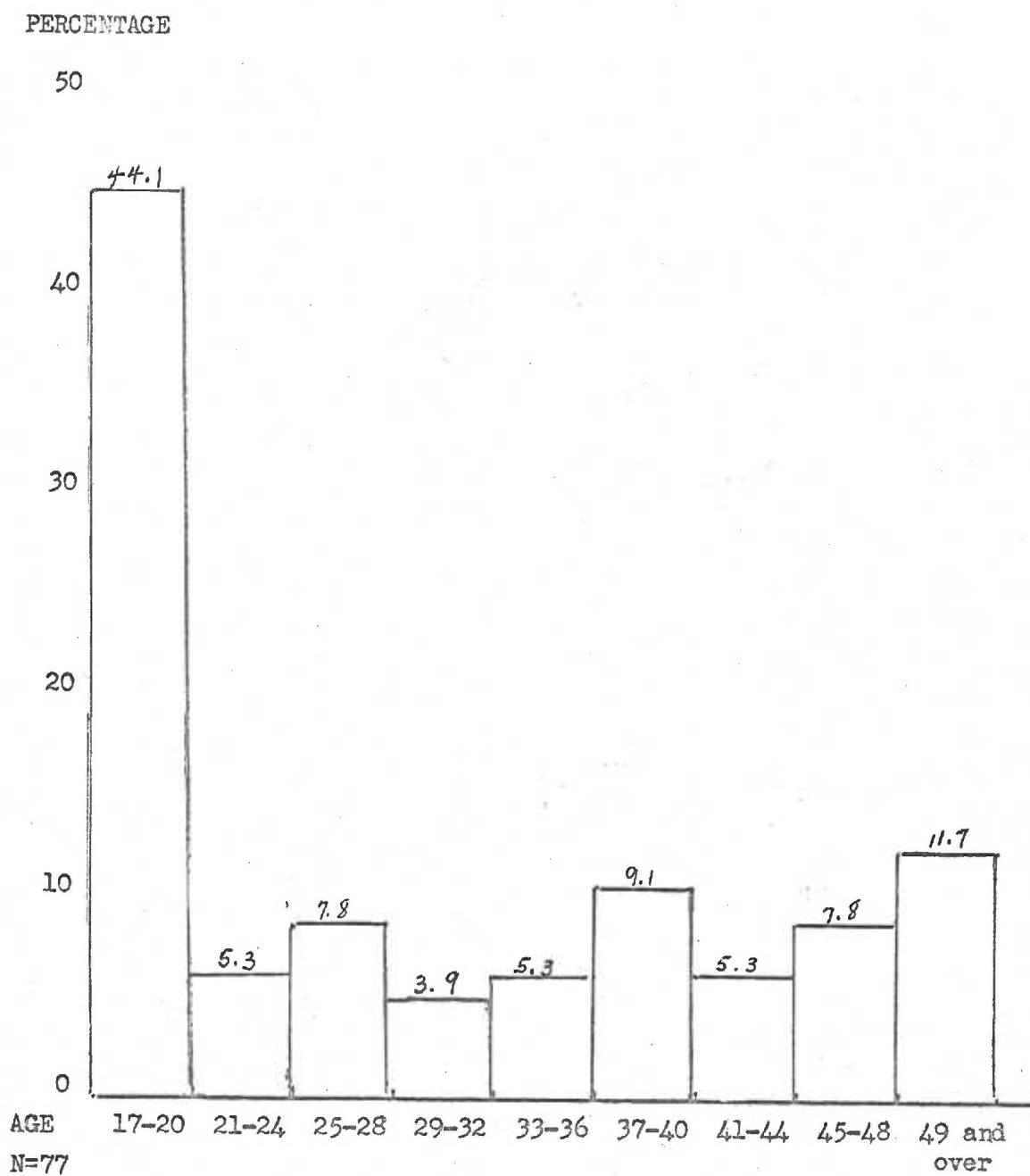


Figure 2. The Percentage of Dropouts by Age in Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing from 1960 - 1965.

Marital status.-- The study of the marital status of the seventy-seven dropouts from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing revealed that 46.8% of all dropouts studied were single. That 44.1% of the seventy-seven dropouts were 17-20 years of age reveals that the 17-20 year old student is single but does not lead to a conclusion that the single person is any less likely to succeed in a program of practical nursing in Oregon. The high percentage rate of the single dropouts for School A and D seemed to indicate that both schools probably enrolled many young, single applicants. The number of married students who withdrew totaled 37.6% of the seventy-seven dropouts in the five schools studied, while divorced and widowed dropouts made up the remaining 25.5%, with widowed being just a little more frequent than divorced. Two widows in this study had enrolled in the program soon after being widowed and withdrew because of "emotional stress." Table 6 presents the marital status of the seventy-seven dropouts from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing and gives number and the percentage for each school.

Table 6. Marital Status of Seventy-Seven Dropouts from Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing from 1960 - 1965

Marital Status (1)	Single		Married		Divorced		Widowed	
	No. (2)	% (3)	No. (4)	% (5)	No. (6)	% (7)	No. (8)	% (9)
School A	9	64.3	3	21.4	1	7.1	1	7.1
B	2	33.33	3	50.0	1	16.66	-	-
C	7	31.9	14	63.8	-	-	1	4.8
D	15	60.0	7	28.0	1	4.0	2	8.0
E	3	30.0	2	20.0	2	20.0	3	30.0
Total	36	46.8	29	37.7	5	6.5	7	9.0

Race.— All seventy-seven dropouts from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing were of the white race.

Education.— The pre-admission education of the seventy-seven dropouts from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing studied revealed that fifty-eight or 75.4% of all the dropouts were high school graduates. Sixteen or 21% of the seventy-seven who withdrew had GED certificates which met Oregon State Board of Nursing requirements that enable the applicant to take State Board Examinations for licensure to practice as a practical nurse in Oregon after successful completion of a program of practical nursing in an approved school. Three of those who withdrew had one year of college education. One student who had had one year of college had been approved for college entrance on a GED certificate. Table 7 shows the level of education of the seventy-seven dropouts.

Table 7. Pre-Admission Education of Seventy-Seven Dropouts from Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing

School	High School		G E D		One Year College	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
A	12	85.7	2	14.3	-	-
B	4	66.7	-	-	2	33.3
C	15	68.2	6	27.3	1	4.5
D	20	80.0	5	20.0	-	-
E	7	70.0	3	30.0	-	-
Total	58	75.4	16	20.7	3	3.8

Time spent in the program.— Though the directors had answered the question, "At what point in the program do you have the greatest number of dropouts?", the records of the dropouts of the five Oregon schools of practical nursing showed clearly at what time the dropout occurred. Table 8 shows that 53 of the 77 dropouts occurred before the fourth month, substantiating that the greatest number of dropouts do occur in the pre-clinical period. The number who drop out after the fifth month was found to be minimal.

Table 8. Time at Which Seventy-Seven Dropouts Occurred
in Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing

Time in the School	Number	Per Cent
(1)	(2)	(3)
Less than one month	5	6.5
One month	27	35.0
Two months	8	10.4
Three months	13	16.9
Four months	12	15.6
Five months	4	5.2
Six months	4	5.2
Seven months	-	-
Eight months	2	2.6
Nine months	-	-
Ten months or over	2	2.6
Total	77	100.0

Previous work experience.-- Work experience of the seventy-seven dropouts varied and the study did not determine how many of those who graduated from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing had had work experience related to nursing, so no generalizations can be drawn from the data of this study. It does show that the number of those having work experience exceeds those who had had no work experience. Table 9 shows the percentage of those who had work experiences which have been categorized for purposes of this study as experience related to nursing, non-nursing, or had had no previous work experience.

Table 9. Previous Work Experience of Seventy-Seven Dropouts from Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing from 1960 - 1965

Related to Nursing		Non-Nursing		None	
No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
15	19.5	32	41.5	30	39.0

Academic performance.--- The investigator determined from the student records the level of academic performance of each of the seventy-seven dropouts from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing. The greatest percentage of dropouts from the individual school and from total number of dropouts from the five schools studied was found to be in the low academic achievers. This is consistent with Tate's study. School A had 78.6% of dropouts rated low in academic performance whereas School C, with a much higher incidence of dropouts, had a more even distribution of academic achievement. It was found that those in the high achiever category who withdrew gave such reasons as husband's transfer to another city, military service (a twenty-two year old male), disinterest or emotional instability. The academic achievement of the seventy-seven dropouts from the five schools of practical nursing is presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Academic Performance of Seventy-Seven Dropouts in the Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing for the Years 1960 - 1965

Academic Performance School	High		Average		Low	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
A	2	14.3	1	7.1	11	78.6
B	1	16.3	2	32.6	3	50.0
C	5	22.7	8	36.7	9	40.1
D	5	20.0	5	20.0	15	60.0
E	1	10.0	4	40.0	5	50.0
Total	14	18.2	20	25.9	43	55.6

Clinical performance.— It was found that clinical performance of the seventy-seven dropouts was closely allied to the academic performance with percentage differences due to another variable "no experience" in the clinical portion of the program. Many low achievers were asked to withdraw from the program before the completion of the pre-clinical period or else the student, realizing academic inadequacy, voluntarily withdrew. Others were average in clinical performance but low in academic achievement and withdrew, as did those of School A, thus showing 50% average clinical performance and 78.6% low academic achievement. The clinical performance of seventy-seven dropouts from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing is presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Clinical Performance of Seventy-Seven Dropouts from Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing for the Years 1960-1965

Clinical Performance School	High		Average		Low		No Experience	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
A	2	14.3	7	50.0	2	14.3	3	21.4
B	-	-	2	33.3	3	50.0	1	16.6
C	3	13.6	5	22.7	4	18.1	10	45.4*
D	6	24.0	3	12.0	11	44.0	5	20.0
E	1	10.0	2	20.0	5	50.0	2	10.0
Total	12	15.5	19	24.7	25	32.4	21	27.3

*The director of School C said she made it a policy not to permit a low academic achiever to enter the clinical portion of the practical nurse program.

The second section of the information taken from student records was concerned with the reasons given for withdrawal from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing. It was found that there was an overlapping of reasons for withdrawal. The low academic achiever often gave a poor clinical performance. It was also found that the student who withdrew for health reasons had a record of poor academic achievement as well.

The students were not required to write letters of withdrawal, so the reasons given by the student to the director, or that the director gave, for requiring the student to withdraw from the practical nurse program are presented in Table 12.

Table 12. Reasons for Withdrawal as Given for or by Seventy-Seven Dropouts from Five Oregon Schools of Practical Nursing for the Years 1960 - 1965

Reason	No. of Dropouts	Per Cent
(1)	(2)	(3)
Poor Performance - Academic and Clinical	30	39.0
Health	10	13.0
Emotional Instability	14	18.2
Pregnancy	4	5.2
Family Responsibility	11	14.3
Called to Military Service	1	1.3
Transfer	1	1.3
Disinterest	2	2.6
Withdrew to Marry	1	1.3
Dishonesty	1	1.3
Poor Interpersonal Relations	2	2.5
Total	77	100.0

The final chapter of this study contains summary, conclusions and recommendations for further study.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

This study was undertaken in an attempt to determine why students drop out of schools of practical nursing in Oregon and to ascertain the percentage of dropouts. It further sought to ascertain any like factors which contribute to incidence of withdrawal. Assumptions were formulated and are presented in Chapter I.

Data regarding dropouts were limited to five Oregon schools of practical nursing which had been in continuous operation from 1960-1965. Data were obtained from structured interviews with the five directors of the schools, from brochures, and from student records.

Data were tabulated and the findings revealed that the percentage of dropout from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing varies, but the mean is below that of other reported studies (Figure 1, Chapter III).

Survey of the admission policies revealed common policies to meet standard requirements for admission to schools of practical nursing in Oregon.

Survey of the pre-admission tests revealed that four of the five Oregon schools of practical nursing used some form of pre-admission tests. (See Table 3, Chapter III.) Only one used a test to seek to

determine personality traits which might be predictive of success in practical nursing.

It was found that interviewing of applicants was done by the director of the schools of practical nursing in Oregon in three of the five schools surveyed and by the nurse supervisor or coordinator in four schools. One school used teams of interviewers.

The five Oregon schools of practical nursing used admissions committees but size and constituency varied. (See Tables 4 and 5, Chapter III.)

The five schools surveyed used the faculty members as counselors and used community counseling services only when the problem was in the realm of family counseling or child guidance.

Those interviewed were in some disagreement as to which students required more faculty time. One felt the high achiever required a great deal of faculty time, three, the low achiever, while another felt the student with an emotional problem was the most demanding of faculty time.

Four directors stated that more dropouts occur among the younger students (age 17-20) but they did not allow this to limit the enrollment of students in that age range. One director stated that class size was limited due to clinical facilities and he was able, for this reason, to have all, or almost all, older students enrolled.

The five Oregon schools of practical nursing have the greatest number of dropouts in the pre-clinical period.

Data that were obtained from students' records showed that the highest percentage of dropouts occurred in the 17-20 year age group.

(See Figure 2, Chapter III.) The survey of records also showed that the greatest majority were single, had a high school diploma, low academic and clinical performance, some work experience with some work experience related to nursing, and that time spent in the school was less than four months. (See Tables 6-11, Chapter III.) Data obtained from the students' records confirmed what the interviewees had stated. The greatest number of dropouts occur in the pre-clinical period of the practical nurse program.

Reasons for withdrawal were obtained from the student record and showed poor academic achievement to be the leading reason for withdrawal. (See Table 12, Chapter III.)

Conclusions

On the basis of the data collected from the participants of this study and from student records surveyed, no widespread generalizations can be drawn. The findings do indicate that:

1. The purposes of this study have been fulfilled. It was ascertained that out of 452 admissions in five schools of practical nursing between 1960-1965, there were 77 dropouts. An analysis of data obtained from the five schools reveals that the mean per cent of dropouts for the five year period is 17.3. In comparison to data reported in the literature, Oregon's record is good. However, further investigation of each school's admission and withdrawal figure leads to the following observations:

- a. all classes are small; the loss of even a few students depletes the source of supply of practical nurses in

- the community.
- b. the school with the highest dropout number reported no failures in State Board licensing examination. It might be conjectured that those who are not succeeding are encouraged to withdraw early. Since enrollment ranged between 13-18 students, it might be questioned whether all possible selection measures are employed and thus ensure fewer dropouts.
 - c. although it was beyond the scope of this study, the size of enrollments leads to the question of how costly the programs are apt to be.

2. The findings of this study do not support any premise that there were any commonalities which contributed to the dropout rate. The highest number of dropouts were said to be due to "poor performance, academic and/or clinical." There were no findings which indicated that any weakness in admission policies, selection techniques, administration of the curriculum, faculty counseling, or other factors influenced the dropout rate. If such factors exist, they were not identified in this study.

3. The findings show that approximately 85% of the withdrawals occurred in the first four months of the program. This appears to have merit, but further scrutiny points to the fact that four months constitutes one-third of the program. A sizeable number left in the first two months, but there remains the concern that practical nurses who do not complete a program due to academic and clinical ineptitude would

be eligible for employment as nurses' aides.

Recommendations

1. Due to the very small size of the existing programs in the five schools under study, the cost of conducting such programs is apt to be considerable. For that reason it is recommended that cost studies be conducted.

2. It is further recommended that follow-up be made of dropouts from practical nurse schools to determine how many remain in the field of nursing by either entering another school or seeking employment as nurses' aides.

3. It is further recommended that another study be done using all data collected in this study, but add to it like information from records of those students who graduated from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing for the years 1960-1965; specifically to determine age range, education, marital status, and work experience as predictors for, or guidelines in, selection of applicants for schools of practical nursing.

4. Finally, it is recommended that a study be made of just the selection techniques used in the Oregon schools of practical nursing doing correlation studies using pre-entrance tests, tests during enrollment, and State Board examinations to determine whether results would be more predictive of successful completion of the practical nurse program and of later on-the-job success.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR A STUDY OF THE DROPOUTS IN FIVE SCHOOLS
OF PRACTICAL NURSING IN OREGON 1960 - 1965

The purpose of this interview is to ascertain the percentage of dropouts in the Oregon schools of practical nursing and seek to determine any factors which contribute to withdrawals.

PART I.

- A. The number of admissions for 1965 _____
 1964 _____
 1963 _____
 1962 _____
 1961 _____
- B. The number of dropouts for 1965 _____
 1964 _____
 1963 _____
 1962 _____
 1961 _____
- C. What are your admission policies? _____

- D. What procedures are used in the admission of students?
1. Tests
- a. Which are used? _____

b. How are they used? _____

2. Interview

a. By whom done? _____

b. Is it standardized? _____

3. Do you have an admissions committee? Yes _____ No _____

a. How appointed?

b. Constituency?

c. Size?

4. What explanation is given students about the following:

a. cost

b. number of hours in school per day or week

c. number of hours in hospital per day or week

d. clinical facilities used

e. transportation

f. housing

g. vacation

E. Counseling services used?

1. School

2. School district

3. Community

- F. Which students require the most faculty time?
1. The high achiever (A-B) _____
 2. The middle achiever (C) _____
 3. The low achiever (D-F) _____
- G. Do you have more dropouts in the younger students, age 17-20, than in the older, more mature students? Yes _____ No _____
1. Do you let this limit your enrollment of this age group?
Yes _____ No _____
- H. At what point in the program do you have the greatest number of dropouts?
1. Pre-clinical _____
 2. Med. - Surg. _____

B. Reasons given for withdrawal:

Comments:

APPENDIX B
MASTER TABULATION

QUESTION	SCHOOLS				
<u>PART I.</u>	A	B	C	D	E
A. The number of admissions for 1960-1965	110	85	108	82	67
B. The number of dropouts for 1960-1965	14	6	22	25	10
C. What are your admission policies?					
a. Age 17 years at time of application	x	x	x	x	x
b. No upper age limit--it depends upon the individual	x	x	x	x	x
c. A high school graduate or achievement of equivalency determined by the G.E.D. test	x	x	x	x	x
d. Good moral character and personal traits evidenced by three personal references	x	x	x	x	x
e. Good physical and mental health	x	x	x	x	x
f. Weight in proportion to height	x			x	
D. What procedures are used in the admission of students?					
1. Tests					
a. Used:					
Otis-Guick Scoring Mental Ability		x		x	x
Comprehensive Reading and English		x			
Reading Comprehensive Test for Prospective Nurses (Geo. Wash. Univ.)					
Henmon-Nelson	x				

QUESTION

SCHOOLS

	A	B	C	D	E
California Psychiatric Testing	x				
No tests			x		
b. How used:					
Special education department of public school system interprets tests	x	x		x	
School of practical nursing sets adequate score for admission to the program	x	x		x	x
2. Interview					
a. By whom done?					
Director of the school of practical nursing	x			x	x
Nurse Supervisor or Coordinator	x	x	x	x	
Teams of Interviewers				x	
3. Do you have an admissions committee?					
	<u>Yes</u>				
	<u>No</u>				
a. How appointed?	x	x	x	x	x
(1) From advisory board			x		x
(2) By Director				x	
(3) School policy - administrator of hospital and nursing supervisor		x			
(4) Appointments by societal groups	x				
b. Constituency:					
Directors of schools and administrators of hospitals	1	3	1	1	
R.N.'s	1	1	1	3	1
L.P.N.'s	1		1		1

QUESTION

SCHOOLS

	A	B	C	D	E
Doctor from O.M.A.	1				1
Lay people	1		1	2	
c. Size	5	4	4	6	3
4. What explanation is given the student about the following: (1) cost; (2) number of hours in school per day or week; (3) number of hours in hospital per day or week; (4) clinical facilities used; (5) transportation; (6) housing; (7) vacation					
a. Fact sheets	x		x	x	
b. Brochures		x		x	x
c. Explanation at time of initial interview	x	x	x	x	x
E. Counseling services used:					
1. School faculty	x	x	x	x	x
2. School district	x	x			
3. Community		x			x
F. Which students require the most faculty time?					
1. The high achiever (A-B)		x			
2. The middle achiever (C)					
3. The low achiever (D-F)	x			x	x
4. Emotional irrespective of achievement			x		
G. Do you have more dropouts in the younger students, age 17-20, than in the older, more mature students?	x		x	x	x
		x			
1. Do you let this limit your enrollment of this age group?					
	x	x	x	x	x

QUESTION

SCHOOLS

H. At what point in the program do you have the greatest number of dropouts?

1. Pre-clinical

2. Med. - Surg.

3. Obstetrics

4. Pediatrics

Comments:

Motivation not GPA considered

Size of class and rank in class important

Group dynamics - low grades are known to group; decision to drop from class due to low grades is made easier.

Lack of testing and pressure to enroll more students caused increase in dropouts

Faculty time spent not always due to poor student achievement in clinical area.

PART II.

A. Information from Student Records

1. Age:

17-20

21-24

25-28

29-32

33-36

37-40

41-44

45-48

49 and over

Marital Status:

Single

Married

Divorced

Widowed

	A	B	C	D	E
1. Pre-clinical	x	x	x	x	
2. Med. - Surg.					x
3. Obstetrics					
4. Pediatrics					
Motivation not GPA considered		x			
Size of class and rank in class important					x
Group dynamics - low grades are known to group; decision to drop from class due to low grades is made easier.	x				
Lack of testing and pressure to enroll more students caused increase in dropouts			x		
Faculty time spent not always due to poor student achievement in clinical area.				x	
1. Age:					
17-20	8	2	6	15	3
21-24	1	1	0	0	2
25-28	1	1	3	1	0
29-32	0	1	2	0	0
33-36	1	0	1	2	0
37-40	0	1	3	1	2
41-44	0	0	2	2	0
45-48	1	0	1	3	1
49 and over	2	0	4	1	2
Marital Status:					
Single	9	2	7	15	3
Married	3	3	14	7	2
Divorced	1	1		1	2
Widowed	1		1	2	3

QUESTION

SCHOOLS

QUESTION		A	B	C	D	E
3.	Race:	W	W	W	W	W
4.	Education:					
	High School	12	6	16	20	7
	G.E.D.	2	0	6	5	3
	College - 1 yr.	0	2	1	0	0
5.	Time spent in the program:					
	Less than 1 mo.	1	1	1	1	1
	1 mo. - 2 mo.	4	1	11	9	2
	2 mo. - 3 mo.	0	0	4	2	2
	3 mo. - 4 mo.	4	0	4	2	3
	4 mo. - 5 mo.	4	2	2	4	0
	5 mo. - 6 mo.	0	2	0	1	1
	6 mo. - 7 mo.	1	0	0	2	1
	7 mo. - 8 mo.	0	0	0	0	0
	8 mo. - 9 mo.	0	0	0	2	0
	9 mo. - 10 mo.	0	0	0	0	0
	10 mo. - 11 mo.	0	0	0	2	0
6.	Previous work experience:					
	Related to nursing	4	0	3	7	1
	Non-nursing	5	2	4	15	6
	None	5	4	15	3	3
7.	Academic performance:					
	High	2	1	5	5	1
	Average	1	2	8	5	4
	Low	11	3	9	15	5
8.	Clinical performance:					
	High	2	0	3	6	1
	Average	7	2	5	3	2
	Low	2	3	4	11	5
	No clinical exp.	3	1	10	5	2
B.	Reasons for Withdrawal:					
1.	Poor Academic Achievement	6	1	6	14	3
2.	Poor Clinical Achiever			2	4	4
3.	Health	1	2	3	3	1
4.	Emotional Instability	3	1	4	5	1
5.	Pregnancy	1		1	2	

QUESTION

SCHOOLS

	A	B	C	D	E
6. Called to Military Service	1				
7. Transfer		1			
8. Disinterest		1	2		
9. Withdrew to Marry				1	
10. Dishonesty				1	
11. Poor Interpersonal Relations				1	1


Typed by
Gwendolyn M. Dunning

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Martha J. Holland for the Master of Science in Nursing

Date of receiving this degree: June 9, 1966

Title: A STUDY OF DROPOUTS IN FIVE SCHOOLS
 OF PRACTICAL NURSING IN OREGON
 1960 - 1965

Approved: 

(Associate Professor in Charge of Thesis)

THE PROBLEM

This study was undertaken in an attempt to determine why students drop out of schools of practical nursing in Oregon and to ascertain the percentage of dropouts. It further sought to ascertain any like factors which contribute to incidence of withdrawal.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE

An interview guide was developed, validated and administered to directors of five schools of practical nursing in Oregon which had been in continuous operation from 1960-1965. Data thus obtained from structured interviews with the five directors of the schools, from brochures, and from student records were tabulated. The results of tabulated data were compared and interpreted.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

From data obtained, the following conclusions might be drawn:

1. The purposes of this study have been fulfilled. It was ascertained that out of 452 admissions in five schools of practical nursing between 1960-1965, there were 77 dropouts. An analysis of data obtained from the five schools reveals that the mean per cent of dropouts for the five year period is 17.3. In comparison to data reported in the literature, Oregon's record is good. However, further investigation of each school's admission and withdrawal figure leads to the following observations:

- a. all classes are small; the loss of even a few students depletes the source of supply of practical nurses in the community.

- b. the school with the highest dropout number reported no failures in State Board licensing examination. It might be conjectured that those who are not succeeding are encouraged to withdraw early. Since enrollment ranged between 13-18 students, it might be questioned whether all possible selection measures are employed and thus ensure fewer dropouts.
- c. although it was beyond the scope of this study, the size of enrollments leads to the question of how costly the programs are apt to be.

2. The findings of this study do not support any premise that there were any commonalities which contributed to the dropout rate. The highest number of dropouts were said to be due to "poor performance, academic and/or clinical." There were no findings which indicated that any weakness in admission policies, selection techniques, administration of the curriculum, faculty counseling, or other factors influenced the dropout rate. If such factors exist, they were not identified in this study.

3. The findings show that approximately 85% of the withdrawals occurred in the first four months of the program. This appears to have merit, but further scrutiny points to the fact that four months constitutes one-third of the program. A sizeable number left in the first two months, but there remains the concern that practical nurses who do not complete a program due to academic and clinical ineptitude would be eligible for employment as nurses' aides.

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations for further study were made:

1. Due to the very small size of the existing programs in the five schools under study, the cost of conducting such programs is apt to be considerable. For that reason it is recommended that cost studies be conducted.

2. It is further recommended that follow-up be made of dropouts from practical nurse schools to determine how many remain in the field of nursing by either entering another school or seeking employment as nurses' aides.

3. It is further recommended that another study be done using all data collected in this study, but add to it like information from records of those students who graduated from the five Oregon schools of practical nursing for the years 1960-1965; specifically to determine age range, education, marital status, and work experience as predictors for, or guidelines in, selection of applicants for schools of practical nursing.

4. Finally, it is recommended that a study be made of just the selection techniques used in the Oregon schools of practical nursing doing correlation studies using pre-entrance tests, tests during enrollment, and State Board examinations to determine whether results would be more predictive of successful completion of the practical nurse program and of later on-the-job success.