

School profile and licensure examination performance of Teacher Education graduates in Northern Philippines

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Abstract –Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) in the Philippines are making efforts to improve their performance in Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Curricular programs are subjected to accreditation and teachers unceasingly participate in professional development endeavors. This descriptive research determined the school profile (accreditation status and educational attainment of faculty) and LET performance of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) and Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) graduates from the seven (7) campuses of a public university in Northern Philippines. Comparison of graduates' LET performance when grouped according to school profile was investigated. Results show that BEEd graduates disclosed a dismal rating since their LET mean performance both on General Education and Professional Education are below the passing mark. Whereas, BSEd graduates have passing marks on General Education and Professional Education except for Major. Relative to school profile, graduates of TEI with higher accreditation status have significantly better LET performance than those enrolled in TEI with lower accreditation status. Thus, subjecting curricular programs to accreditations implies better passing rate in LET. Moreover, graduates of TEI where majority of faculty members are doctorate degree holders have significantly higher LET rating compared to those graduates of TEI with teachers dominated by master's degree holders. This finding implies that teachers' educational attainment contributes to the success of graduates in LET. With these findings, it is recommended for TEIs to continue subjecting curricular programs to accreditations and investing on teachers' professional development.

Keywords – Licensure examination performance, school profile, teacher education, accreditation status, educational attainment of faculty

INTRODUCTION

Quality tertiary education significantly matters as it bridges the quality of work that graduates would offer in their employment. This quality education becomes even more a pressing concern for teacher education institutions (TEIs) that aim to build the future of the nation through quality of teaching given to the youth.

There are several notions of quality teaching where one of which stems from a cognitive resource perspective which associates the mindset that teachers bring into the profession. It is through this notion that at the onset, quality teaching is related to one's competence as exhibited on professional and academic tests, which in turn, presumes a teacher's effectiveness. This competence as verified by test scores is a significant premise basically supporting the contention on whether teachers from alternative programs like "Teach for America" who have compiled

notable records of high GPAs and test scores, are of higher quality than those who undertake traditional teacher education programs [1]-[2]. Following the first notion is the idea that quality teaching is related with the documents that show credence of the teacher, which surfaces the notion of whether all students are taught by licensed teachers, as this teacher licensing is deemed an indispensable requirement in the practice of the profession. Moreover, the impression that quality teaching is assumed to be predicted by the teacher's beliefs, attitudes, knowledge and disposition, becomes another notion for ponderance [3]. This view of quality teaching has been interspersed into known standards such as "National Board for Professional Teaching Standards" [4] and "National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education" [5]-[6] through which accomplished teachers are certified and teacher education programs are accredited, respectively.

Indeed, as affirmed by Zeichner & Conklin [7], enhancing teachers' competence has been the focus in the offering of various teacher education and professional advancement over the past decades.

With this premise, comes the question of the quality of teachers produced in these programs with licensing as an indispensable requirement. For Wang, et al. [8] and Darling-Hammond & Youngs [1], it is commonly posited that quality teaching plays a key role in shaping academic performances of students. Hence, it could not be denied that quality teachers have profound impact on student learning as widely recognized and acknowledged by researchers and stakeholders. The value of quality teachers has been consistently demonstrated in researches, given their position as the "single most influential in-school factor in improving student learning" [9] with a lasting impact on student outcomes [10]-[12]. This stands to reason as teachers are accountable in preparing diverse students to become reflective, creative, and critical thinkers which are required in a dynamic world [11], [13].

It is with this backdrop that the Philippine government is currently investing on education reform through the Enhanced Basic Education Program or the K-12 Curriculum which does not only call for academic excellence but also for better teacher qualification. While it may have been professed that teachers are the single most influential factor for student success, this does not preclude other factors that impact student learning. Subsequently, the advancement of quality teacher preparation programs is underscored for tertiary institutions by researchers, policymakers and practitioners. However, Green, et al. [14] stressed the essence of teacher preparation as this possibly factors in the quality of education received by them as these researchers averred that there is a known divergence between classroom experiences and reality that to which graduate teachers subscribe particularly in their feeling of being unprepared for the teaching profession.

This disparity poses the crucial question on what teacher preparation and what factors may be contributory to eventual licensing a teacher should have for the practice of the teaching profession. The essentiality of teacher licensure is well understood as mark of quality assurance in the teaching workforce as it establishes the beginning of teaching practice as well as the base intended to determine teacher education graduates who have developed the competence and those who have not.

In the Philippine context, teacher education graduates' competence and preparedness to teach is

gauged by the national examination called the "Licensure Examination for Teachers" (LET), previously known as "Philippine Board Examination for Teachers" (PBET), and is administered by the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC). This is in response to the promulgation and the mandate given by the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994 which aims to measure the extent of the competencies and knowledge acquired by teacher education graduates. As specifically stated, "*All applicants for registration as professional teachers shall be required to undergo a written examination which shall be given at least once a year in such places and dates as the Board may determine upon approval by the Commission. Valid certificate of registration and a valid professional license from the Commission are required before any person is allowed to practice as a professional teacher in the Philippines, except as otherwise allowed under this Act*" [15]-[16].

In Acosta & Acosta's [17] study, it is unveiled that teacher licensure significantly matters in the enactment of the basic education reform in the Philippine Education system. In particular, the Department of Education with its new Senior High School Program in place, ascertained that classrooms are filled up with qualified teachers by streamlining teacher employment in the program. It is in this context that assessing teacher qualification, as evidenced by teacher licensing, warrants current education reform agenda that would tailor fit to the attainment of teacher quality and excellence. On the other hand, debates also factor in the possible entry of teacher applicants in academic institutions, introducing the idea about "whether or not the teaching profession needs to be opened for easy entry" [18]-[19] but Stotsky [20] argues for strengthening teacher education programs along with several factors such as coursework and licensure tests. Stotsky illuminates this argument by stressing that a stronger licensing system would upscale the quality of the teaching force - as a consequence, would upgrade student achievement.

It is by understanding how teacher licensure is strongly associated to professional development and teaching competitiveness that teacher education programs need to zero in on elements such as but not limited to teacher profile, accreditation status, among others. In Green et al.'s [14] study, they quoted graduate teachers indicating a desire for greater emphasis on some facets of the profession, including programming and planning, accreditation, and reporting. Accordingly, effective teachers'

preparation needs to be comprehensive as it considers all aspects of the teaching profession.

However, for the past decade, LET is one of the professional board examinations in the country with unimpressive national passing rates for both elementary and secondary levels [21]-[23]. This might be the reason for the plenitude of research studies exploring on factors contributory to teacher education graduates' success in LET. These studies hope to provide data which serve as bases in devising mechanisms or interventions to improve the licensure examination performance of TEIs.

Most of the established factors affecting LET are student-related which are non-intellective attributes such as gender [24] and age [25], and intellective attributes such as high school average [24],[25], intelligence quotient [26], scores in admission examination [24] and English proficiency test [27], academic achievement in college [24],[26]-[30], and pre-board examination performance [24], [25], [31]-[33]. Other factors found to be determinants of LET are teacher-related such as teaching competence [34], educational attainment, trainings and seminars attended, academic rank, workloads [31], and length of service [26]. Curriculum and instruction, admission and retention policies [34], and library and laboratory facilities [26] were also identified factors affecting LET. Likewise, Balanquit, et al. [35] found out that accreditation status is positively and significantly related to LET performance of teacher education graduates.

The present study bears similarities with the existing literatures; however, dearth of studies dealing on educational attainment of faculty and accreditation status as variables affecting LET had been observed in the literature review. The level of educational attainment of TEI faculty principally matters since they prepare would-be teachers. It is then expected for TEI teachers to have higher degree of education and continuing exposures to various professional and academic endeavors. At the heart of this expectation, teachers are encouraged to pursue post-graduate studies with an ideal purpose of growing professionally and equipping themselves to become better educators. Consequently, teacher education students get a better quality of education from their teachers which materially sets a better groundwork for passing the licensure examination.

Moreover, TEI curricular programs are subjected to accreditations with its main objective to better the quality of instruction and other related services they

offer to students and other stakeholders [36]. The areas evaluated in accreditations are curriculum and instruction, faculty, support to students, facilities, laboratories, research, extension, administration, vision, mission, goals & objectives, and licensure examination. Also, accreditation is a requirement of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) in the application of TEIs to Center of Development (COD) and Center of Excellence (COE) statuses [37]. Subjecting teacher education programs to accreditations is an opportunity for TEIs to continuously improve their quality of education and eventually to prepare their graduates in passing the LET.

Pursuing teachers' post-graduate studies and subjecting TEI curricular programs to accreditations require great effort, time, energy, and funds for faculty members and the administration [38]. It is then imperative to explore more on these factors of LET to support the body of knowledge claiming that educational attainment of teachers and accreditation status are contributory factors in passing the LET. Most importantly, TEI teachers become guided and more motivated to pursue higher degree of education and TEI administrators become encouraged as well to support and invest more on accreditation undertakings.

It is in the light of these issues and challenges in quality teaching, licensure examination performance and the school profile that influence it, that this study is anchored on, with the assumption that baseline data and awareness of the actual picture of teacher education program and graduates may help better the implementation of teacher education program and direct the professional development for teachers and would-be teachers.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study described the school profile and licensure examination performance of teacher education graduates from the seven (7) campuses of a public university in Northern Philippines. These are the graduates who are first-time takers of March and September 2017 LET. The specific objectives of the study are the following: (1) determine the school profile of the graduates such as accreditation status and educational attainment of faculty, (2) determine the LET performance of the graduates along "General Education", "Professional Education", and "Major", and (3) compare the graduates' LET performance when grouped according to school profile.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

Descriptive design through documentary analysis was employed in this study since it determined the graduates' school profile (accreditation status and educational attainment of faculty) and their LET performance (General Education, Professional Education, and Major). Moreover, graduates' LET performance was compared when grouped according to their school profile.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents of the study are 1492 graduates of College of Teacher Education (CTED) from the seven (7) campuses of a public university in Cagayan province, Philippines. They are graduates of Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEEd) and Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) who took the LET in March and September 2017 testing periods. Only the first-time takers were included in the study. The distribution of the respondents by curricular program and testing period is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of the graduates by curricular program and testing period

Profile	Specific Profile	F	%
Curricular Program	BEEd	509	34.1
	BSEd	983	65.9
	Total	1492	100.0
Testing Period	March 2017	247	16.6
	September 2017	1245	83.4
	Total	1492	100.0

Research Instrument

A summary sheet of graduates' school profile (accreditation status and educational attainment of faculty) and their LET performance was utilized in the study. Accreditation status on this study refers to the level of accreditation awarded or granted by the "Accrediting Agency of Chartered Colleges and Universities in the Philippines" (AACCUP). Moreover, educational attainment of faculty in this study was categorized into two (2): doctorate-dominated and masters-dominated. Doctorate-dominated and masters-dominated means that majority (more than 50%) of the graduates' teachers are doctorate degree holders and master's degree holders, respectively. Furthermore, LET performance refers to the graduates' rating along General Education, Professional Education, and Major.

Research Procedure

A request letter was forwarded to the University President asking permission for the conduct of the study. Upon approval, data on the level of accreditation awarded by AACCUP and educational attainment of faculty were requested from the College Deans. Properly endorsed by the University President and Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) Regional Office 2, ratings of non-board passers and board passers of March and September 2017 LET were requested from the PRC Commissioner. The graduates' ratings were released by the PRC on May 31, 2018.

Data analysis

Descriptive statistics such as frequency count and percentage were used to describe the graduates' school profile while mean and standard deviation were utilized to determine the graduates' LET performance along General Education, Professional Education, and Major. The graduates' LET performance was described using the following categories: $\bar{x} \geq 75$: *Passed* and $\bar{x} < 75$: *Failed*. Moreover, inferential statistics, specifically independent sample t-test was used to compare the graduates' LET performance when grouped according to accreditation status and educational attainment of faculty.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 2. School profile of the graduates

Program	School Profile	Specific Profile	F	%
BEEd	Accreditation Status	Level 1	421	82.7
		Level 3	88	17.3
		Total	509	100.0
Educational attainment of faculty	of faculty	Doctorate-dominated	242	47.5
		Masters-dominated	267	52.5
		Total	509	100.0
BSEd	Accreditation Status	Level 1	668	68.0
		Level 3	315	32.0
		Total	983	100.0
Educational attainment of faculty	of faculty	Doctorate-dominated	615	62.6
		Masters-dominated	368	37.4
		Total	983	100.0

Legend: Level 1: Level 1 accredited by AACCUP, Level 3: Level 3 accredited by AACCUP, Doctorate-dominated: More than 50% of graduates' teachers are doctorate degree holders, Masters-dominated: More than 50% of graduates' teachers are master's degree holders

Table 2 presents the graduates' school profile such as accreditation status and educational attainment of faculty. Majority of the graduates both from BEEd (f=421, p=82.7%) and BSEd (f=668, p=68.0%) programs were enrolled in a TEI with Level 1 accredited by AACUP. Most of the BEEd graduates (f=267, p=52.5) had teachers dominated by master's degree holders. On the other hand, majority of the BSEd graduates (f=615, p=62.6) were enrolled in a TEI where most of the faculty members are doctorate degree holders.

Table 3. LET performance of the graduates

Program	LET Component	\bar{x}	SD	Remark
BEEd	General Education	68.98	9.44	Failed
	Professional Education	72.06	9.23	Failed
	Overall Rating	70.93	8.67	Failed
BSEd	General Education	81.45	7.47	Passed
	Professional Education	75.79	7.63	Passed
	Major	72.14	9.66	Failed
	Overall Rating	75.45	7.51	Passed
As a Whole	General Education	77.19	10.10	Passed
	Professional Education	74.52	8.40	Failed
	Overall Rating	73.91	8.21	Failed

Legend: $\bar{x} \geq 75$: Passed; $\bar{x} < 75$: Failed.

As shown in Table 3, BEEd graduates showed a dismal result since they disclosed failed ratings ($\bar{x} < 75$) on the two LET components, namely General Education ($\bar{x} = 68.98, SD = 9.44$) and Professional Education ($\bar{x} = 72.06, SD = 9.23$). This finding may indicate that graduates in the BEEd program are not academically prepared as Acedo [39] stated that "students with lower preparation and motivation tend to be attracted to the BEEd program". Likewise, according to Vecaldo [40], "BEEd students find difficulty in mastering all the courses in the BEEd curriculum because it is a combination of many general education courses".

BEEd graduates registered the lowest rating in General Education. This finding is inconsistent with the result of Delos Angeles [25] and Apare, Arcilla, and Vazquez [41] where they revealed in their study that BEEd graduates bared the lowest rating in General Education. At large, BEEd graduates unveiled poor LET performance ($\bar{x} = 70.93, SD = 8.67$). This is

consistent with the national passing rate of BEEd graduates for March and September 2017 LET. For March 2017 LET testing period, the national passing rate for elementary level is only 10.39% (5 600 passers out of 53 915 takers) [42] and for the September 2017 LET testing period, the national passing rate is 26.33% (21,198 passers out of 80,509 takers) [43].

Notwithstanding the BEEd graduates' performance, BSEd graduates have passing marks ($\bar{x} \geq 75$) in General Education ($\bar{x} = 81.45, SD = 7.47$) and Professional Education ($\bar{x} = 75.79, SD = 7.63$). However, they have poor LET performance along Major ($\bar{x} = 72.14, SD = 9.66$). This LET performance of the BSEd graduates on their field of specialization implies poor academic preparation along this area. There may be deficiency on the instruction and pre-board review strategies of teachers and reviewers of major subjects. Ferrer, Buted, and Ferrer [24], Antiojo [44], and Ofqueria [45] revealed the same trend of LET results in their study where BSEd graduates registered lowest in Major and highest in General Education. Collectively, LET performance of BSEd graduates are within the minimum passing rate of 75% ($\bar{x} = 75.45, SD = 7.51$).

As a whole, the teacher education graduates have a passing mark in General Education ($\bar{x} = 77.19, SD = 10.10$) and a failing mark in Professional Education ($\bar{x} = 74.52, SD = 8.40$). Overall, they unveiled a failed LET rating ($\bar{x} = 73.91, SD = 8.21$). The possible reasons for the graduates' poor performance in LET are students' poor study habits, teachers' unvarying instruction and assessment, and inefficient pre-board review mechanisms. Scantiness of effective learning materials such as books, modules, and e-learning softwares could also be a factor on graduates' poor performance in LET.

Table 4. Comparison of graduates' LET performance when grouped according to TEI's accreditation status

Program	Accreditation Status	LET Performance		t-value	p-value
		\bar{x}	SD		
BEEd	Level 1	69.90	8.80	-7.80	0.000**
	Level 3	75.84	5.91		
BSEd	Level 1	74.67	7.65	-4.83	0.000**
	Level 3	77.12	6.94		
As a Whole	Level 1	72.82	8.44	-9.51	0.000**
	Level 3	76.84	6.74		

**significant at the 0.01 level

*significant at the 0.05 level

Legend: Level 1: Level 1 accredited by AACUP, Level 3: Level 3 accredited by AACUP

Table 4 reveals that graduates of TEI with Level 3 accreditation status have significantly better LET performance compared to those enrolled in TEI with Level 1 accreditation status. This claim is true to both BEEd (p-value<0.05, t=-7.80) and BSEd (p-value<0.05, t=-4.83) programs and as a whole (p-value<0.05, t=-9.51). Accreditations provide opportunities for TEIs to improve their services, especially the delivery of instruction to students which is an important factor in preparing them for licensure examination. Also, TEIs try their best to meet the standard of the accrediting agencies by improving their laboratories and facilities and funding the teachers' professional development activities such as seminars and trainings, research publication and presentation, and extension endeavors, among others.

This finding suggests that subjecting TEI's curricular programs to accreditations is worth investing to ensure quality education and better passing rate in LET. This finding affirms the study of Balanquit, Nool, Ladia, and Corpuz [35] where they found out that TEIs with higher accreditation status tend to attain higher passing rate in LET and TEIs with lower accreditation status will likely have lower passing rate in LET.

Table 5. Comparison of graduates' LET performance when grouped according to educational attainment of faculty

Program	Educational Attainment	LET Performance		t-value	p-value
		\bar{x}	SD		
BEEd	Doctorate-dominated	72.07	8.39	2.87	0.004**
	Masters-dominated	69.89	8.80		
BSEd	Doctorate-dominated	75.90	7.63	2.44	0.015*
	Masters-dominated	74.70	7.26		
As a Whole	Doctorate-dominated	74.82	8.03	5.01	0.000**
	Masters-dominated	72.68	8.29		

**significant at the 0.01 level

*significant at the 0.05 level

Legend: Doctorate-dominated: More than 50% of graduates' teachers are doctorate degree holders, Masters-dominated: More than 50% of graduates' teachers are master's degree holders

As presented in Table 5, significant differences were proven on the graduates' LET performance when grouped according to educational attainment of faculty. Findings in the BEEd (p-value<0.05, t=2.87) and BSEd (p-value<0.05, t=2.44) programs and as a whole (p-value<0.05, t=5.01) are consistent in revealing that graduates of TEI where most of the faculty members are doctorate degree holders have significantly higher LET rating compared to those graduates of TEI with teachers dominated by master's degree holders. Pursuing a doctorate degree means more opportunities to learn new trends in teaching strategies and assessment. Conceivably, teachers' foundation on teaching and learning theories, principles, and methodology are optimally developed. Most importantly, pursuing teacher's doctorate degree opens a lot of exposures to research which is very essential in improving their teaching skills. Teachers use research as a source of new ideas and improvements to create worthy teaching-learning practices [46]. This suggests that teachers in TEI are encouraged to pursue postgraduate studies so they could offer quality education and appropriate training to teacher education students. This finding is concomitant with Visco's [31] result where educational attainment had been established as a significant predictor of LET. Faltado III [34] also established faculty competence as a significant correlate of LET. Similarly, Delos Angeles [47] determined teachers' mastery of subject matter as the strongest predictor of LET performance.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The BEEd graduates disclosed LET mean ratings on General Education and Professional Education which are below the passing mark. Meanwhile, BSEd graduates unveiled passing marks in General Education and Professional Education except for Major that registered a failing mark. This finding may connote a decline in the quality of education provided to BEEd students particularly along areas on General Education and Professional Education and to BSEd students specifically along Major area. A lenient retention and admission policy could also be attributed to their poor performance.

Graduates of TEI with higher level of accreditation status showed significantly higher LET ratings compared to those graduates of TEI with lower level of accreditation status. It can be conjectured that subjecting TEI's curricular programs to accreditation will improve the LET performance of graduates since the ultimate goal of undergoing accreditations is to

attain specified standard of educational quality. Furthermore, graduates who were enrolled in a TEI dominated by teachers who are doctorate degree holders have significantly better LET performance than those enrolled in TEI where most of the faculty members are master's degree holders. This implies that educational attainment of faculty contributes to the success of graduates in LET.

With these findings, the following recommendations were derived: (1) A comprehensive study needs to be conducted to determine the underlying causes of the poor licensure performance of BEED graduates for both General Education and Professional Education. (2) Further study appraising the instruction and assessment strategies of teachers teaching Major subjects in the BSEd program should be conducted to have bases in framing intervention programs for the improvement of the graduates' performance along Major component. (3) Subjecting TEI's curricular programs to accreditation should be one of the priorities of HEIs since this serves as opportunity for TEIs to continuously improve their educational delivery system and eventually to have high passing rate in licensure examination. (4) Administrators should craft a comprehensive professional development plan with its goal to support teachers in pursuing post-graduate studies and other academic endeavors that could equip them to become more effective teacher educators.

Although this study produced significant data on teacher education graduates' LET performance and on TEI's profile, there are also limitations to this study. One limitation is on the design of the study which only made use of LET documentary results for the analysis. While documentary analysis was done through the PRC-released documents, the study needed more validation measures to confirm the analysis made. Materially, the documentation for the actual teaching done by those with masters' and doctorate degrees through observation and immersion were not considered in the study which may have been additional authentic sources of data. Similarly, analysis with respect to accreditation and other school profile found to be contributory to LET performance could have been deepened with results from accrediting bodies and interviews or FGDs with stakeholders.

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