

Pre – Service Teachers' Licensure Examination Plans and Content Knowledge

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Abstract - All graduates of teacher education programs aim to pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) and work as a professional teacher hence they prepare for it. This study assessed the College of Teacher Education in Batangas State University ARASOF Bachelor of Secondary Education and Bachelor of Elementary Education 2014 graduating class' need and plans for review in preparation for the Licensure Examination for Teachers. It used the survey descriptive method of research with the survey questionnaire as the main tool for gathering data. With respect to work plan soon after graduation, the study found that majority of the respondents planned to work soon after graduation with a few of them undecided. Most of the respondents intended to take the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) the soonest time possible. Further, most of them would review to prepare themselves for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) in a review center but there were a few who would have a self – review due to financial and schedule constraints. The respondents were foundto have a good content knowledge in the professional education courses, general education courses and their specialization. The findings add up to the limited research on student's preparation and plans for the licensure examination and thereby can serve as basis in improving educational practices and the student's preparation for the licensure examination.

Keywords: graduates, Licensure Examination for Teachers, review for LET, teacher education, self-reported content knowledge

INTRODUCTION

The provision of quality education is one of the major goals of the Philippine government. This is in recognition of the role of quality education in the holistic development of every citizen necessary for nation – building and economic development. With this enormous influence of education, the government invests in education as one of the vehicles to attain its economic and social development agenda.

Critical to the attainment of providing quality education is the quality of teachers. The teachers are the entities responsible for the development of learners. They facilitate student's learning and assist in their development. They inspire learners to search for knowledge. They mould learners and guide them to attain their goals. They affect learners in varied ways.

Considering the effects of teachers on learners and the learners' subsequent effects on nation – building and economic development, the government, therefore, has a function to regulate the teaching practice by requiring aspiring teachers to pass the licensure

examination before they engage in the teaching profession. Thus, the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act of 1994 was promulgated and mandates that

"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. A 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."
(R.A. 7836, Art III Sec. 13)

Testing requirements for certification and licensing have an effect on the quality and effectiveness of teachers. The examination can improve the quality of teachers if the examination is a good measure of the

competencies needed for effective teaching (Mitchell et al, 2001). Relevant to this, licensed or certified teachers are found to produce stronger student achievement gains than do uncertified teachers (Hammond et al, 2005).

Licensure examinations are considered important by teacher education students in their professional development (Riney et al, 2006). Thus, graduates of teacher education courses all aim to pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers. This will make them to be registered as professional teachers and become eligible to teach either in the public or private educational institution. Moreover, passing the board examination will not only give them honour and prestige but will also give them a competitive edge over those who are non-LET passers.

Passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers is not a simple matter. It requires adequate preparation and readiness. More importantly, it requires good knowledge and background as they must obtain a rating of at least 75% in the three areas of General Education and Professional Education for BEED graduates, and General Education, Professional Education and their Specialization for BSED graduates to pass the licensure examination. Although this knowledge and background can be acquired in the four year- duration of the Bachelor of Secondary Education and Bachelor of Elementary Education programs, most examinees still feel that they need to study more and review so that they would be better prepared for the examination. This scenario works to the advantage of the numerous review centers all over the country and nowadays a productive business for many.

Higher education institutions offering teacher education programs, like the Batangas State University ARASOF Nasugbu, carry a challenging role of developing competent and effective teachers. They must prepare teacher education students to the monumental tasks ahead of them. They must equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills needed in the effective development of the learners. They must expose them in managing the different aspects of the teaching – learning process and in dealing with the different stakeholders to whom they are accountable to. On top of this, they must prepare their students to pass the LET. Viewed in this manner, licensure requirements hold universities and teacher education programs accountable and ensure that teachers are well trained and competent (Riney et al, 2006).

Students, however, differ in their capability to learn and acquire knowledge. As their knowledge differs from one another, this may affect their chances of

passing the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). The acceptance that others may be far ahead in terms of content knowledge brings the reality that there is a big need to prepare and review for the licensure examination. Through this effort, graduates may be able to pass the LET and be conferred the title of being a professional teacher.

Relevant to this line of thought, the study aimed to assess the BSED and BEED 2014 graduating class' need for review in preparation for the Licensure Examination for Teachers. Specifically, the study determined the respondents work plans after graduation. It also investigated their plans soon after graduation relative to the Licensure Examination for Teachers. The study also investigated the content knowledge of the respondents with respect to professional education courses, general education and the content courses for BEED and specialization courses for BSED.

The contributions of this study would be of interest to Teacher Education institutions in general. The data could be used in program accreditation in the area of curriculum, faculty performance and alumni. The findings can also be used as baseline information for the continuous improvement of instruction and the preparation of students for the Licensure Examination for Teachers. The study may encourage faculty to exert more effort in enhancing their teaching effectiveness to enhance students' knowledge. Likewise, the study may enhance the provision of a favourable and supportive academic environment for student learning and acquisition of knowledge. This may include, but not limited to, the development and provision of instructional materials, references, books and the likes for the use of the students which would hopefully assist them in studying and improving their content knowledge.

The findings of the study may also serve as basis for conducting in-house LET review classes as an extension program for those graduates who have financial problems and conflicts in schedule. Conducting this review as an extension program would reflect the institution's sense of responsibility and concern towards its graduates. It would also give the graduates an opportunity to be better prepared for the LET and assist them pass it which would both benefit them and the institution from where they were prepared.

Finally, the study also contributes to the area of research on post-graduation plans and may shed light on the preparation of graduates' relevant to licensure examination. Further, the study also contributes to the assessment of the content knowledge of graduates and

whether the efforts of a college are successful or not form the point of view of its graduates.

Nonetheless, the contributions of this study are not expected to be exclusive to the teacher education context, and should be of value to any college aiming to turn –in responsive and quality graduates.

METHODS

Research design

The main goal of the study is to assess the Batangas State University ARASOF BSED and BEED 2014 graduating class' need for review in preparation for the Licensure Examination for Teachers. To achieve this goal, the study used the descriptive survey method of research wherein participants answer questions administered through interviews or questionnaires and their responses are analysed and described (Jackson, 2009).

Instrument

The study relied on a survey questionnaire to gather the data needed. The questionnaire was subjected to content validation and reliability testing. The reliability testing gave a Pearson r of 0.63 which signifies its consistency. The study focused on the survey of the content knowledge of the Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) graduating class in general education and the 11 professional education courses as these are the coverage for the Elementary Teachers LET examinees (PRC Board News). For the Bachelor Secondary Education graduating class, the specialization courses were included in addition to general education and the professional education courses as these are the coverage of the Secondary Teachers LET examinees (PRC Board News).

Participants

The participants of the study were the BEED and BSED graduating class of 2014 composed of 100 students. They were given background about the study and confidentiality of responses was assured. All of them were given questionnaires. However, only 42 BEED students and 46 BSED students for total of 88 returned the questionnaire and participated in the study.

Data Analysis

Data gathered from survey questionnaires were tallied, analysed and interpreted. As the study is mainly a descriptive survey research, the statistics applied were limited to frequency count, weighted mean, ranking and t-test.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-service Teachers' post-graduation work plans

There is a time gap between graduation and the licensure examination and this is crucial. As the preparation for the licensure examination may be deterred by seeking employment after graduation, the study included an investigation of the participants' work plans.

As can be expected, majority of them planned of working soon after graduation. The survey showed there were 42 who answered that they planned of finding a job; whereas 28 indicated they had no plans of working soon after graduation, and the rest indicated that they were undecided. Discussion with them revealed that they felt the need to earn a living and the pressure that they should be helping in financially supporting their families as they would be graduates in the very near future.

Similar findings in other parts of the world are also obtained. In the study on the post-graduation plans of Boston College (Class of 2013), Swarthmore College (Class of 2014) and University of Wisconsin Madison (2012 – 2013), majority of the respondents reported having plans to work full-time further strengthening the statisticsthat there is steady increase in the percentage of graduates reporting they plan to work full-time.

Pre-service teachers' LET plans

To reiterate, the time between graduation and the date of the licensure examination is very crucial. The activities examinees are involved with may affect their chances of passing the examination. The licensure examination for Teachers is given twice a year. There is a schedule soon after the March graduation. At the time of the study, this was scheduled in July but was later announced to be rescheduled in September. The other one is given in the first quarter of the next fiscal year usually January or March.

With respect to the Licensure Examination for Teachers, 64 intended to take the LET with the rest undecided. Of this number, 41 would like to take the July (rescheduled to September) 2014 Licensure Examination, and 14 would take the January 2015 schedule. Nine of them were not sure when they would take the examination. For taking the July examination, the respondents gave the following reasons. They believed that their knowledge is still fresh which would give them a better chance of passing the licensure examination. If they passed the examination, they would be able to get a job as soon as possible and

support themselves and their family. They would also take the July LET because they want to assess their knowledge and learning compare to other graduates. In addition, they believed that they would have a great time reviewing for July (rescheduled to September) examination as their background knowledge was still fresh. For those who would be taking the LET in January, they reasoned out that they wanted to have a more comprehensive review so that they would be better prepared for the examination.

The responses implied that participants, in general, put importance on their readiness to take the LET. Based on their responses, their plans about the LET depend upon their knowledge, how they compare with other graduates and having a review.

The respondents were also asked about their review needs and plans for the LET. Fifty four of them answered that they would have it through a review center while 22 would do it through self – review. For having a review in a review center, the top reasons were that they believed that the review center would improve their chances of passing the board and their parents wanted them to enrol in a review center. These are followed closely by the reasons that they were worried that they could not have an effective review due to household chores, and they needed conducive environment to review. They also claimed that it is their preference or choice to have a review in a center. Other reasons were that they needed peer pressure and a strict schedule to follow; they would learn better in groups than when they are alone, and they could keep abreast with the latest development in the field of teacher education.

The other way of preparing for the licensure examination is through self – review. There were nine respondents who gave this answer. They disclosed that they would also like to have a review in a center but they were constrained by their budget and time as they intended to work soon after graduation.

A survey of literature reveals that graduates who want to take the licensure or certification examination prepare themselves in varied ways. Shultz and Kies (2008) found that a wide variety of resources are used by students to review for the licensure examination or certification and the popularity of the publishers' series among students varied by discipline.

BEED and BSED students' self – reported content knowledge

To be able to pass the licensure examination, the examinees need to understand the different courses deeply and flexibly. This is called content knowledge

and pertains to knowledge of the subject and its organizing structures (Grossman, Wilson, & Shulman, 1989). Although there are studies suggesting that a good performance in the academic subjects does not guarantee a passing performance in the teachers' board examination (Garcia, 2013); Pachejo & Allaga, 2013), nevertheless, it is important that the examinees or students have a good perception of their content knowledge.

Table 1 presents the respondents' content knowledge in the professional education courses and content courses.

Table 1. Respondents' Self – Reported Content Knowledge in Different Courses

Courses	WM	VI	Rank
I. Content Courses for BEED	2.86	Good	8
II. Professional Teacher Education Courses			
Educational Psychology (Child and Adolescent Development; Facilitating Learning)			
	2.79	Good	9.5
Principles of Teaching I and II	2.79	Good	9.5
The Teaching Profession	2.71	Good	12
Assessment of Learning I and II	2.75	Good	11
Issues in Education	2.96	Good	5
Curriculum Development	2.91	Good	7
Educational Technology I and II	3.22	Good	2
Social Dimensions of Education	3.09	Good	3
Developmental Reading	3.04	Good	4
Guidance and Counselling	2.91	Good	6
Field Studies and Student Teaching		Good	
	3.23		1
General Weighted Mean	2.94	Good	

Scale: 1.0 – 1.50 Poor; 1.51 - 2.50 = Fair; 2.51 – 3.50 Good; 3.51- 4.00 Excellent

The table shows that respondents reported a content knowledge at the level of *good* in all courses considered in the study. With a registered weighted mean of 3.23 and ranking first among the items are Field Studies and Student Teaching courses. It must be mentioned here that some participants conducted these two courses in the campus' laboratory school whereas the rest were deployed in both public and private schools. The self – reported content knowledge could be attributed to the fact that these two courses are experiential in nature and respondents may have learned more effectively through this method hence the believed that they have good knowledge in these courses.

Following in the second rank with a weighted mean of 3.22, the respondents reported that they have good knowledge in the courses Educational Technology I and

II. The response of the participants implied that they were very interested in preparing and utilizing instructional materials to promote student learning. Interview divulged that the principles and concepts of these two courses were better understood by the respondents during their field study and student teaching.

In the third rank, the respondents forwarded a weighted mean of 3.09 verbally interpreted as good for Social Dimensions of Teaching. That this course may seem easy to understand by the respondents can be attributed to its nature wherein it does not incorporate numbers and calculations and probably that it is handled by a seasoned faculty member.

In the last three ranks from the bottom are the courses on Educational Psychology which include Child and Adolescent Development and Facilitating Learning and the courses Principles of Teaching I and II respectively. Child and Adolescent Development cover the concepts and theories on development while Facilitating Learning deals with the psychological foundations and theories of learning. The courses Principles of Teaching I and II deal with the different approaches, methods and strategies of teaching including lesson planning and classroom management. With this nature, it is inevitable that they may find these courses somewhat difficult to learn hence assessed as by them as that they have good knowledge only.

In the eleventh rank is the course Assessment of learning. The respondents reported that they have good knowledge in the course Assessment of Learning I and II registering a weighted mean of 2.75. Assessment of Learning I and II includes test construction and statistical treatment and interpretation of assessment data, hence maybe perceived as difficult to master by the students.

Occupying the last rank is The Teaching Profession course with a weighted mean of 2.71 verbally interpreted as good. This course subject includes philosophical and legal foundations of education and the teaching profession hence may be difficult to learn for some students.

The BSED self – reported content knowledge was also surveyed in the study. Table 2 presents the BSED class self – reported content knowledge.

Table 2 shows the BSED class self – reported content knowledge. They reported that they have *good* knowledge in all courses mentioned in the study. In the first rank, the respondents divulged that they have a good content knowledge in Educational Technology I and II with a weighted mean of 3.34.

Table 2. BSED class self – reported content knowledge

Courses	WM	VI	Rank
I. Specialization Courses (Biological Science/ English/Mathematics)	3.29	Good	4
II. Professional Teacher Education Courses			
Educational Psychology (Child and Adolescent Development; Facilitating Learning)	3.02	Good	10
Principles of Teaching I & II	2.98	Good	11
The Teaching Profession	3.11	Good	6
Assessment of Learning I & II	3.13	Good	5
Issues in Education	3.09	Good	7
Curriculum Development	2.87	Good	12
Educational Technology I & II	3.34	Good	1
Social Dimensions of Education	3.30	Good	2
Developmental Reading	3.07	Good	8
Guidance and Counselling	3.03	Good	9
Field Studies and Student Teaching	3.30	Good	3
Weighted Mean	3.13	Good	

Following in the second rank, the respondents disclosed that they also have a good knowledge in Social Dimensions of Education. Next in the third rank, the BSED class disclosed having a good knowledge level in the courses Field Studies and Student Teaching. These findings are somewhat similar to that of the BEED graduating class who also reported having the highest content knowledge in these three courses. This could be attributed to the experiential in nature of the courses Field Studies and Student Teaching and these are offered in the last year of their BSED program which would make their content knowledge recent and fresh. Further, through these two courses, the respondents may be able to clarify, apply and internalize concepts and principles in Educational Technology and Social Dimension of Teaching enhancing their content knowledge. In addition,

In contrast to BEED class who assessed their knowledge in content courses as somewhat low, the BSED class revealed that they have a good knowledge level in their major courses. These major courses registered a weighted mean of 3.29 and ranked fourth among the 12 courses.

In the last three ranks, the BSED class admitted having a *good* knowledge also in Educational

Psychology (Child and Adolescent Development; Facilitating Learning), Principles of Teaching I and II and Curriculum Development. Analysis of the findings reveals that BEED graduating class also rank these two courses out of these three lower. As these courses are offered in second year of BSED course, there is a possibility that they have already forgotten some of the most important principles and concepts hence the respondents rank them the lowest. Moreover, respondents may find these courses more difficult than others owing to their nature i.e. Child and Adolescent Development cover concepts and theories on development while Facilitating Learning deals with psychological foundations and theories of learning; Principles of Teaching focuses on different approaches, methods and strategies of teaching including lesson planning and classroom management; Curriculum Development covers the analysis of the history, development and nature of the different curricula used in the Philippines and the exploration of the curriculum design and writing process.

To enrich data gathered, this research compared the content knowledge of two groups of participants using t-test guided by the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference in their content knowledge. BSED students were found to have higher content knowledge ($M = 2.9383$, $SD = 0.1752$) than BEED students ($M = 3.1291$, $SD = 0.1565$), $t(10) = 4.1031$, $p = 0.0021$). This finding can be attributed to the general perception that the courses in BSED program are more difficult than those of the BEED programs hence BSED students might have put more effort in studying and this is reflected in their self – reported content knowledge. Further, students who did not qualify to the BSED program may be accepted to the BEED programs. Moreover, taking into consideration that BEED curriculum is a combination of many general education courses, it might be difficult for the BEED students to have mastery of all these courses and their content knowledge is affected.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The state of being prepared to take the Licensure Examination is a result of myriad factors that need to be elucidated and analysed for the benefit of the students and examinees. Some of these factors were explored descriptively in this study. Its main goal is to assess the BSED and BEED 2014 graduating class' need for review in preparation for the Licensure Examination for Teachers. As the time gap between graduation and the schedule of the licensure examination is crucial, the study determined the respondents' work plans after

graduation as well as their plans relative to the Licensure Examination for Teachers. It also surveyed their content knowledge in professional education courses, general education and content courses for BEED and specialization courses for BSED taking into consideration that this content knowledge would have an effect on their performance in the Licensure examination.

The findings of the study can be synthesized as follows. It is evident that majority of respondents planned to work soon after graduation. Further, majority of respondents intended to take the Licensure Examination for Teachers the soonest time possible. In preparation for this examination, most respondents would review either in a review center or would rather do it on their own. In terms of content knowledge, it was concluded that although both groups respondents have good content knowledge in the professional education courses, general education courses and their specialization, BSED students have better content knowledge than BEED students.

The following recommendations are offered for related research in the field of students and graduates' preparation for licensure examination. The plans for the licensure examination should be explored more deeply to determine its effect on examinees' performance in the examination. Likewise, the quality of the review given in review centers should be assessed and its effect on the examinees' performance in the licensure examination be investigated.

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