

GRADUATES' PERSPECTIVES OF THE INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTION FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE LICENSURE EXAMINATION FOR TEACHERS' PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT. *This qualitative study explores the perspectives of teacher education graduates regarding institutional interventions aimed at preparing them for the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT). The study focuses on graduates of a technical teacher education program at a state university in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. Utilizing a narrative inquiry approach, six participants who graduated in 2022 and had taken the LEPT were interviewed to share their experiences. Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the collected data. Findings revealed two primary interventions provided by the institution: an in-house review for graduating students and a yearly cumulative comprehensive examination covering all courses taken each year. The in-house review, conducted over five weeks, received mixed feedback from participants, with some perceiving it as beneficial while others viewed it as inadequate compared to external review centers. Similarly, participants expressed concerns about the comprehensive examination, citing issues such as miskeyed answers, unclear item stems, and platform accessibility problems. Despite these interventions, participants did not fully attribute their success in the licensure examination to these institutional efforts. Contrary to previous studies, which suggested that pre-licensure reviews positively influence licensure examination outcomes, this study found minimal impact from the in-house review and comprehensive examination scheme on graduates' success in the licensure examination. Recommendations include conducting a thorough review of the in-house review process, establishing clear outlines for review sessions, and implementing ongoing evaluation of the review program to address emerging issues and enhance effectiveness. This study contributes to the understanding of institutional interventions in teacher education programs and highlights the need for continuous improvement to prepare graduates for licensure examinations better.*

Keywords: Licensure Examination. Professional Teachers, Technical Teacher Education, comprehensive examination, mock licensure examination

I. INTRODUCTION

Schools, all over the world regard licenses as an essential employment entry in the teaching field [1]. The Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT) is one of the measures of quality education among teacher education institutions in the Philippines [2]. Given the significance of successfully passing the LEPT, Teacher Education Institutions [TEIs] are compelled to do well in the board examination [3]. For the last six (6) LEPT examinations for the secondary level, the passing rate ranged from 46.94% to 57.76%, based on the Philippine Professional Regulatory Board (PRC). The trend of poor results among LEPT takers in the last decade underscored nationwide concerns about the educational standards of TEIs [4].

Curriculum misalignment, along with deficiencies in educational training and mock examinations, contributed to disappointments among education graduates [5]. Moreover, exposure of students to test-taking strategies through forums, seminars, and classroom discussions has been shown to enhance their understanding of licensure exams and increase their chances of success [6]. In addition, exposing students to testing objectives and time-management strategies has led to further success on high-stakes tests [6]. The literature stressed that a review significantly influences the final licensure examination performance. Exposure to in-house reviews or course audits is an essential preparation for taking the LET. These programs entail comprehensive assessments designed to simulate the real board examination, which graduating students must successfully attain [3]. Mock examinations or comprehensive examinations administered by universities in the Philippines identify the weaknesses of the students and

serve as tools for analyzing their performance [7]. It has been recommended to consistently administer comprehensive or mock examinations to students before the licensure examination for teachers to enhance their chances of successfully passing the board exam [6]. Thus, teacher education institutions (TEIs) arrange comprehensive pre-board review programs to prepare teacher education students for the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET).

This study aimed to explore teacher education graduates' perspectives of the institutional interventions provided by the teacher education institution for their success in the licensure examination

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study delves into the narratives of graduates from a technical teacher education program at a state university in Northern Mindanao, focusing on their experiences with institutional review strategies aimed at preparing them for the licensure examination for teachers. By adopting a narrative inquiry research design, the researchers aimed to explore the unique experiences and perspectives of individuals through storytelling, allowing for a rich understanding of their journey toward licensure. To ensure a comprehensive understanding, purposive sampling was employed to select participants who graduated in 2022 and had undertaken the LEPT. This method facilitated the selection of individuals with firsthand experiences relevant to the study's objectives. A total of six participants were interviewed, comprising an equal gender distribution of three males and three females. Data saturation, indicating the point at which no new information or themes emerge from

additional data **collection**, was achieved with the inclusion of these six participants. This ensured that the study captured a diverse range of perspectives and experiences while maintaining focus and relevance to the research questions.

The primary data collection method employed was in-depth interviews, allowing participants to articulate their experiences, insights, and perceptions regarding institutional interventions preceding their graduation. Subsequently, the collected data underwent thematic analysis, a methodological approach aimed at identifying recurring patterns, themes, and insights within the narratives.

Overall, this methodological approach facilitated a nuanced exploration of graduates' experiences with institutional review strategies, offering valuable insights into the efficacy, challenges, and areas for improvement within teacher education programs preparing students for licensure examinations.

II. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The participants identified two interventions implemented by the institution to help them be successful in the licensure examination: the in-house review for graduating students and the yearly cumulative comprehensive examination that covers all courses taken every year. The in-house LET review is a crucial preparation program implemented by universities and colleges to help pre-service teachers perform well in the LET [8]. The in-house review provided to the students ran for 5 weeks and was conducted once a day for 8 hours before the participants' graduation. Each week, a representative from a review center in the region provides 8 hours of review, which usually starts with a pretest in the areas of general education, professional education, and specialization. Two (2) of the respondents had a positive attitude towards the in-house review, saying that it was a **"great initiative of the institution (P02)"** and that they were **"excited for the review (P03)"**. On the other hand, 4 out of the 6 participants expressed that they felt like the reviews were "marketing strategies of the review centers." One participant relayed that **"the content of the in-house review seemed like just the tip of the iceberg (P04)"** when compared to those provided by the review centers that came out in the actual licensure examination. All of the participants enrolled in the same review center made a good impression on them during the in-house review. It is intriguing to note that all participants passed the LEPT.

In terms of the yearly comprehensive examination, the participants narrated that they started taking this examination in their second year of college until their senior year. The comprehensive exam cumulatively covered their courses every year. This strategy aims to ensure that students retain their learning from the courses integrated into the curriculum, establishing a strong knowledge and skill set in each student. It involves monitoring each learning activity to help improve the performance of students when taking up the professional examination, certificate, or eligibility examinations [9].

When asked about their experience taking the comprehensive examinations, the participants raised several issues and concerns, which included mis-keying of answers leading to incorrect markings, unclear item stems causing confusion, and platform issues preventing access to the test. The said comprehensive examination was conducted remotely through

the online learning management system of the university. The participants noted that some of the test items were available online with the correct answers, and students had the opportunity to search for the correct answers, thereby posing a threat to the validity of the results. The participants also expressed that they felt **"no pressure to do well in the examinations since their scores don't have any implication on their academic status or even on their graduation (P01)"**. On the contrary, one participant narrated that she felt "very pressured preparing for the comprehensive examination because of the information that they cannot graduate if they can't pass the said exam (P05), but later found out that said "rule" was not implemented. Students may retake the examination until they can satisfy the passing rate set at 83%. Four (4) participants in this study expressed that they took the comprehensive examinations three times, while one (1) took the examination twice before achieving a passing score. The participants are unanimous in saying that they have not felt that the conduct of the comprehensive examination has contributed to their LEPT performance.

The results of this study were contrary to the results of the study on the Bachelor of Science in Basic Education Graduates of the University of the Cordilleras, where students had mock licensure examinations and found out that respondents gained a positive impact of the said examination on their performance [8]. The narratives also contradict the literature suggesting that pre-licensure or mock reviews serve as reliable indicators for determining licensure examination results compared to the actual licensure examination [10]. The ineffective academic programs and in-house reviews implemented by academic institutions have diminished the motivation of student teachers to strive for improved academic performance and higher examination ratings [5]. The participants were asked where they attribute their success in the licensure examination, and they expressed that the review center has been helpful, especially in the areas of general education and professional education, but not "that much" in the specialization. One participant expressed that the instruction she gained in the four years of preservice education has been helpful but that somehow, she **"forgot some of the lessons (P04)"**. Another participant expressed that he learned **"more in the major subjects he had in the institution than from the review center (P02)"**. The participant added that "I find it very difficult to prepare for the major subtest since there are too many areas to study that include Home Economics, Industrial Arts, Information and Communications Technology, and Agri-Fishery Arts". Another participant (P06) shared that while she enrolled in a review center, she also took time for self-review from the online and print reviewers and that it had contributed to her success in the licensure examination to some extent.

Passing the Professional Regulation Commission's (PRC) licensure examination is regarded as one of the greatest accomplishments a student can make in his or her life [11]. Review programs and other related assessments, like pre-board examinations and review interventions, can be embedded in the teacher education curriculum [12]. Further, the literature stressed that a comprehensive examination should be administered in the review program to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses and strategically target

poor-performing students and repeaters to increase their chances of passing [12].

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- The in-house review conducted by the institution for graduates' success in the licensure examination had minimal contribution based on students' feedback. Despite the institution's efforts to provide comprehensive review sessions, participants expressed mixed feelings toward the effectiveness of these interventions.
- The comprehensive examination scheme did not appear to influence graduates' performance in the licensure process. Participants highlighted several issues during the administration of these examinations, such as technical glitches, unclear item stems, and accessibility challenges. These findings emphasize the need to ensure the validity and reliability of assessment methods utilized in preparing students for licensure examinations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions, the following are hereby recommended:

- The institution may consider conducting a thorough review of the in-house review process to identify areas for improvement. Gather feedback from both students and instructors to pinpoint specific weaknesses or inefficiencies in the review program.
- To ensure efficient use of time and prevent topic redundancy, it is advisable to establish a clear outline of discussion topics for each session. This approach promotes focused learning and maximizes the effectiveness of the review process.
- The institution may establish a system for ongoing evaluation and assessment of the in-house review program and monitor student performance and satisfaction levels regularly to identify any emerging issues and make timely adjustments as

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