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Readiness to teacher education program: the role of academic performance as an entry-level of future educators

Jessa A. Roman, Adriel G. Roman
College of Teacher Education, Laguna State Polytechnic University, Siniloan, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

Higher academic performance during the senior high school program and passing marks in the qualifying examination are the two major requirements before an aspirant tertiary student is admitted to a teacher education program. However, questions have been raised on the performance of teacher education graduates in the Licensure examination, which in the past decade, obtained a low national passing percentage. Given the scenario, is the entry-level requirement sufficient, or does it need further enhancement? This study correlates the academic performance during high school of 273 aspirant education students with their qualifying examination scores. A descriptive–correlational design was used. Results show that aspirant students' academic performance during senior high school is in outstanding level. However, it does not match their entrance examination results in the three main components of the examination for teacher education students, namely: general education, professional education, and major field of specialization. For this reason, it is concluded that obtaining high academic records during high school does not guarantee obtaining a high entrance examination rating. Finally, several recommendations are offered after the conduct of the study.

Corresponding Author:

Jessa A. Roman
College of Teacher Education, Laguna State Polytechnic University
Siniloan, Laguna, Philippines
Email: jessa.roman@lspu.edu.ph

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic performance is one of the important proofs of students' school journey. It is a tool that assesses how a student performed during their mid-day academic learning [1]. It also manifests how they participate, cooperate, study, listen, and accomplish the tasks assigned by different subject areas as prescribed by the curriculum. Academic performance is the result of the assessment and evaluations done by the teachers based on standard competencies needed for each grade level typically defined by grade point average (GPA) and standard test scores [2].

In the high school academic journey, students aim to achieve higher academic grades. One of the reasons is, it is one of the requirements when they enter college. A study found that GPA and high school ratings are predictors of course grades [3]. Though not all courses in the tertiary level set an academic performance threshold (grade requirement), in some courses, like education, it is a must. For this reason, students strive to achieve high academic performance (grades) in their high school levels particularly senior high since grades required by institutions of higher learning come from the senior high school performances of students. However, studies provide contrasting points of view on whether academic performance in high school (grade) implicates their entry-level in tertiary.

For instance, Al Hazaa *et al*. [4] explored the benefits of class attendance and academic performance in high school which act as the foundation for their higher education performance. Another is the study of Steedle and Way [5] investigated the predictive power of high school GPA on postsecondary enrollment and found it significance. On the other hand, Pipere *et al*. [6] found that the number of students enrolled in teacher education programs has decreased due to the nonfulfillment of the average rating. Likewise, Fraysier *et al*. [7] has pointed out the weak predictive value of using past performances (such as GPA) to predict future success, which is also not a predictor of postsecondary enrollment.

Aside from academic performance, passing the entrance test is one of the major admission requirements for institutions of higher learning in the Philippines [8] and other countries across the globe [9], [10]. Due to its importance, researchers find ways to use machine learning strategies to predict assurance in passing the admission test [11]. In some colleges and universities, whether public or private, aspirant tertiary students need to pass the entrance examination administered by these colleges and universities, which affects future licensure tests [12]. In addition to other requirements (secondary), the academic performance and entrance examination are the two major requirements set by higher education institutions (HEIs). For this reason, students need to be ready for these two major requirements to be admitted to HEIs. If neglected, they may miss the opportunity of pursuing their preferred course that will guide them in their chosen career.

Teacher education is one of the courses where academic performance during high school matters, specifically when it comes to admission. Teacher education courses in the Philippines include: i) Bachelor of Secondary Education with different specializations such as English, Mathematics, Science and Technology, Filipino, Social Studies, Values Education; ii) Bachelor of Physical Education; iii) Bachelor of Technical and Vocational Teacher Education; iv) Bachelor of Elementary Education; v) Bachelor of Early Childhood Education; and vi) Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLEd); among others.

The teacher education program is where aspirant teachers are enrolled. While enrolling in the program takes a lot of requirements in screening, but when students graduate, large number of students struggle when it comes to passing the board examination. In fact, the national passing percentage in the licensure examination for teachers (LET) from 2009 to 2019 showed an average of 28% for elementary education and 37% for secondary education [13]. This means that, on average, the passing percentage is below 50% for the past decade. This scenario calls for reviewing the curriculum implementation, assessment and evaluation, admission requirements, and retention for teacher education for further enhancement of the curricular offering of teacher education programs. This also calls for further study on whether the current admission requirements are still sufficient or need enhancement. In this study, the readiness of aspirant educators as measured by their academic performance is correlated to their qualifying examination rating to see whether there is an association between the two major requirements in teacher education programs, bridging a gap between academic and professional readiness. It also highlights the implication of entry-level metrics in teacher preparation to provide empirical insights into screening and admission processes for policy recommendations.

Readiness is essential in one's chosen course as it affects one's future. To ensure positive and favorable outcome, the readiness of students is necessary to determine. Determining readiness in the chosen course, like teacher education, will minimize the prevalence of future issues and problems of students such as anxiety brought by unfavorable experiences during pre-service teaching [14] and dropping out [15]–[18].

This study determined the readiness of education students enrolled in teacher education college in one state university in the Philippines by correlating academic performance to their qualifying examination results. In particular, this study answered the following questions: i) What is the academic performance of the aspirant education students as reflected on their high school grades? ii) What is the level of performance of the aspirant education students based on their scores on the qualifying examination with respect to general education, professional education, major, and overall result? iii) Is there a significant relationship between the academic performance of the aspirant education students as reflected on their high school grades and their level qualifying examination scores considering program/major chosen, and examination components? and iv) Is the academic performance of the aspirant education students as reflected on their high school grades a predictor of their success in qualifying examination in teacher education program?

2. METHOD

This study utilizes the descriptive–correlational design of research. Descriptive design is used to describe the actual phenomenon without making any intervention or interpolation. This design considers the present condition as characteristics exists naturally without introducing a treatment or does not manipulate any of the variables [19]. Correlation is also considered to find the association between the two variables. Data were obtained from incoming first-year teacher education students at one university in the Philippines. A total of 273 aspirant teacher education students participated in the study, which comprised all students who passed the

admission or entrance examination of the university and opted to be enrolled in any programs under the college of teacher education. Hence, due to resource constraints, the actual number of sample size is being justified [20].

The instrument used was the qualifying examination, which is administered by the college, consisting of 100 items for general education, 50 items for professional education, and 50 items for major fields of specialization. The table of specifications for each examination was based on the curriculum content prescribed by the commission on higher education policies, standards, and guidelines. For the instrument's validity, the adopted examination had undergone validity checking by 15 content experts from the same college on another university campus where the study was conducted. Since the college has been utilizing the qualifying exam for more than five years, no rating instrument was distributed by the researcher to check the internal consistency of the instrument; thus, the utilization of the instrument is solely based on the judgment of the college.

Scores in the qualifying examination and academic performance during high school of the students were analyzed per program. The personal profiles of the respondents were not included to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. To answer each research question, researchers used mean, standard deviation, Pearson's correlation and analysis of variance. To control confounding variables in the study, the researchers used stratification before the data analysis. Respondents were grouped according to the programs they enrolled. This is to minimize the effects of programs enrolled as an extraneous variable [21]. The alpha level of significance is set at 5% or 95% confidence level. Statistical procedures were done using a licensed SPSS version 29.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the high school academic performance of aspirant teacher education students with respect to their chosen field of specialization. It can be seen from the results that the students' performance in various specializations is outstanding where aspirant science majors obtained the highest mean performance. The results insinuate that aspirant teacher education students manifested remarkable performance during their high school years, resulting in various awards received such as academic excellence. Based on the triangulation made by the researcher, the entry-level performance in the teacher education where the study is conducted is set to 87% or above. This ensures that aspiring educators have the necessary competencies when they start their teacher education journey. This implies that students complied with the grade requirement needed to enroll in teacher education courses.

Table 1. Academic performance of the aspirant career and technical education (CTE) students as reflected on their high school grades

Major	N	Mean	SD	Verbal interpretation
Mathematics	24	92.33	2.71	Outstanding
Filipino	22	90.68	2.38	Outstanding
English	47	91.94	2.94	Outstanding
Values Education	21	90.76	2.14	Outstanding
Science	20	93.04	2.41	Outstanding
Social Studies	43	92.51	2.75	Outstanding
Physical Education	44	90.66	2.44	Outstanding
Elementary Education	32	90.94	2.91	Outstanding
Early Childhood Education	11	90.64	3.38	Outstanding
BTLEd/BTVTEd	9	90.00	2.18	Outstanding
Overall performance	273	91.34953	2.624778	Outstanding

Note: BTVTEd= Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education.

Table 2 indicates the performance of the students in the qualifying examination taken which includes 100 questions in general education, 50 questions in professional education and major/specialization. In interpreting the mean scores, the total number of items for each examination category is divided by the desired number of classes (K=5) to get the class interval corresponding to poor, fairly satisfactory, satisfactory, very satisfactory, and outstanding. The data revealed that all programs in general and professional education performed fairly, where elementary education had the highest mean performance. Filipino, on the other hand performed least in general education while technology and livelihood education together with technical vocational teacher education (BTLEd/BTVTEd) in professional education. Based on the results, it is inferred that aspiring teacher education students lack the fundamental competencies needed to respond to questions about general education which means that their excellent performance in high school does not guarantee high scores in this kind of examination. Moreover, fair performance in professional education signifies little knowledge of the students since it is not covered in the high school curriculum. For this reason, in order to be prepared for the admission or qualifying examination, aspirant teacher education students need to be acquainted on the different teaching principles and theories.

Table 2. Level of performance of the aspirant CTE students based on their scores on the qualifying examination with respect to general education, professional education, major and overall result

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Verbal interpretation
General education (100 items):				
Mathematics	24	21.83	4.84	Fair
Filipino	22	21.55	3.84	Fair
English	47	24.28	4.63	Fair
Values Education	21	24.24	3.91	Fair
Science	20	23.85	4.36	Fair
Social Studies	43	24.51	4.00	Fair
Physical Education	44	23.84	4.25	Fair
Elementary Education	32	40.38	8.20	Fair
Early Childhood Education	11	25.73	3.72	Fair
BTLEd/BTVTEd	9	21.89	2.76	Fair
Overall performance	273	25.21	4.45	Fair
Professional education (50 items):				
Mathematics	24	12.42	2.39	Fair
Filipino	22	11.86	2.73	Fair
English	47	13.21	3.29	Fair
Values Education	21	13.71	4.11	Fair
Science	20	12.70	3.33	Fair
Social Studies	43	12.53	2.85	Fair
Physical Education	44	12.93	2.80	Fair
Elementary Education	32	18.38	2.80	Fair
Early Childhood Education	11	11.73	3.80	Fair
BTLEd/BTVTEd	9	11.56	2.70	Fair
Overall performance	273	13.10	3.08	Fair
Major (50 items):				
Mathematics	24	15.50	4.25	Fair
Filipino	22	27.59	5.02	Satisfactory
English	47	17.55	3.93	Fair
Values Education	21	24.43	4.50	Satisfactory
Science	20	14.70	3.79	Fair
Social Studies	43	26.30	5.03	Satisfactory
Physical Education	44	18.07	4.09	Fair
Elementary Education	32	18.94	4.17	Fair
Early Childhood Education	11	19.73	3.20	Fair
BTLEd/BTVTEd	9	11.89	4.88	Fair
Overall performance	273	19.47	4.28	Fair
Qualifying exam result (200 items):				
Mathematics	24	49.75	7.30	Fair
Filipino	22	61.00	7.12	Fair
English	47	55.04	6.36	Fair
Values Education	21	62.38	9.05	Fair
Science	20	51.25	6.61	Fair
Social Studies	43	63.35	7.42	Fair
Physical Education	44	54.84	6.32	Fair
Elementary Education	32	77.69	11.70	Fair
Early Childhood Education	11	57.18	4.45	Fair
BTLEd/BTVTEd	9	45.33	5.89	Fair
Overall performance	273	57.78	7.22	Fair
Total				
General education	273	25.64	7.28	Fair
Professional education	273	13.37	3.56	Fair
Major	273	20.03	6.20	Fair
Qualifying exam result	273	59.04	11.20	Fair

Additionally, the Table 2 shows that in terms of major/specialization, despite fair overall performance, it is worthy to note that Filipino, Values Education and Social Studies performed satisfactorily. Among the other programs, BTLEd/BTVTEd was found to have the lowest performance. Satisfactory performance denotes that students are prepared for their intended college course and area of specialization which also corresponds with their taken high school strand. In general, the overall performance in the qualifying examination is fair. This revealed the students' low level of knowledge in the subjects of the teacher education programs and offerings. This further refers to the college roles to provide students' necessary competencies. In relation to this, for an institution to receive better LET performance rating, teacher education institutions must strictly screen upcoming enrollees, considering 85 and up average and should implement the same in its retention policy [22]. In summary, it is necessary to examine the performance of the aspirant CTE students to determine their competencies in the coverage of the

examination. Also, this serves as basis to ensure the qualifications of the students to pursue teacher education courses. In contrast to this, Allensworth and Clark [23] mentioned that there is an inconsistent correlation between standardized test scores and readiness in college across schools, consider relying less heavily on it.

Table 3 reflects the significant relationship between students' high school academic performance and the examinations they have taken, which covered general and professional education and major/specialization. Qualifying exam results and overall performance are also correlated. It was found that there is no correlation between students' academic performance and professional education test scores. This demonstrates the lack of knowledge of the students in that field since the subjects it covers are limited to education students and are not included in the high school curriculum. Conversely, there is a correlation between academic performance and general education test scores of elementary and early childhood education programs. The data uncover the direct relation of the variable that high test scores correspond with high academic performance. This indicates that the reason for the examinees' good performance was their prior knowledge and strong foundations in the subjects covered in these programs.

Table 3. Significant relationship between high school academic performance and qualifying examination results

Major	Variable		Computed value	P-value	Decision	Interpretation
Mathematics	Academic performance	General education	0.03	0.874	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	-0.26	0.226	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.48	0.019	Reject H_0	Significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.22	0.313	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
Filipino	Academic performance	General education	-0.053	0.814	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	0.162	0.472	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.352	0.109	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.281	0.205	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
English	Academic performance	General education	-0.13	0.402	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	0.02	0.909	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.50	<0.001	Reject H_0	Significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.23	0.121	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
Values Education	Academic performance	General education	0.38	0.092	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	0.23	0.315	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.39	0.081	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.46	0.035	Reject H_0	Significant
Science	Academic performance	General education	-0.24	0.306	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	-0.25	0.282	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.23	0.331	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Qualifying exam result	-0.16	0.514	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
Social Studies	Academic performance	General education	0.18	0.246	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	-0.06	0.702	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.43	0.004	Reject H_0	Significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.37	0.015	Reject H_0	Significant
Physical Education	Academic performance	General education	0.05	0.733	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	0.10	0.510	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.40	0.007	Reject H_0	Significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.34	0.024	Reject H_0	Significant
Elementary Education	Academic performance	General education	0.46	0.009	Reject H_0	Significant
		Professional education	0.34	0.054	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.20	0.280	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.47	0.006	Reject H_0	Significant
Early Childhood Education	Academic performance	General education	0.13	0.711	Failed to Reject H_0	Not Significant
		Professional education	0.09	0.804	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.30	0.379	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.39	0.235	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
BTLEd/ BTVTEd	Academic performance	General education	0.00	1.000	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	-0.32	0.403	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	-0.43	0.243	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Qualifying exam result	-0.51	0.165	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
Overall	Academic performance	General education	0.025	0.683	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Professional education	-0.002	0.976	Failed to reject H_0	Not significant
		Specialization	0.226	<0.001	Reject H_0	Significant
		Qualifying exam result	0.141	0.020	Reject H_0	Significant

According to Valle and Brobo [24], performance of graduates in the LET examination could be credited to college preparation and GPA. Teacher education institutions understand that important academic guidelines or procedures in every institution are policies related to admission, retention, and LET preparation.

Also, academic policies are essential tools for establishing and sustaining high-quality instruction for education students.

Based on the results, students' high academic performance links to high score in major/specialization examination of the Bachelor of Secondary Education Major in Mathematics, English, and Social Studies and Bachelor of Physical Education Programs. This shows that the students have advanced learning about their chosen specialization during their high school education. However, Alipio [25] stressed that senior high school (SHS) strand by itself did not predict academic performance. Nevertheless, it may be interpreted that they have matched their high school strand taken with their selected course and specialization. This contrasts with the study conducted by Gapi and Oliveros [26] that there is a mismatch rate between the strand of the learners during their senior high school and the course they enrolled in college which lead them to lack foundational academic knowledge. Moreover, the data prove that there is a positive correlation of academic performance and the qualifying examination results of Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Values Education and Social Studies and Bachelor of Physical Education Programs. The relationship means that the students who have achieved high academic performance will also achieve high score on the college of teacher education qualifying examination.

Additionally, as indicated by the overall performance in the qualifying examination results, their high school academic performance does not predict high performance in general and professional education examinations. This means that their knowledge in these fields is insufficient to answer the test questions. On the other hand, the data discovered that high academic performance is a reliable predictor of successful performance of the students in major/specialization and qualifying examination results. Their performance in the examination reflects to their outstanding performance in high school. Also, students are equipped with the competencies to answer test questions well in these areas.

In general, results indicate the passing performance of the aspirant teacher education students to enroll in teacher education course offerings. This qualifying examination is a significant method in selecting qualified students. According to the study conducted by Fuente [27] admission and retention policies must be strictly implemented to ensure success in pre-service teaching. This is also supported by Boliver and Powell [28] that admission standards are framed principally about the meritocratic equality of opportunity and that some HEIs seek to admit the 'best students'.

Table 4 presents the test of effect of academic performance to the qualifying examination. It is worthy to note the positive implication of academic performance to the qualifying examination of aspirant CTE students where data revealed that high academic performance relates to high performance in major/specialization examination. This means that the predictor of entry-level in major is academic performance. This result infers the need for the use of students' grade as a way to determine the readiness of the students which conforms to the findings of several studies on the significance of academic performance in high school as a measure college readiness [29].

Table 4. Test of effect of the academic performance of the aspirant CTE students

Source	Dependent variable	Df	Mean square	Computed value	P-value	Decision	Interpretation
Academic performance	General education	15	52.12	0.983	0.474	Failed to reject Ho	Not significant
	Professional education	15	13.92	1.107	0.35	Failed to reject Ho	Not significant
	Major	15	79.44	2.205	0.007	Reject Ho	Significant

In relation to this, ensuring that aspirant CTE students passed the qualifying examination does not only on the adherence of the admission guidelines but also in preparation for the licensure examination. Yet, it is important that before the entry-level they already have knowledge about their chosen course. According to Ahmed *et al*. [30] teachers who performed well academically during their higher education have high extent to demonstrate higher competence in the licensure examination. Meanwhile, achievement of Bachelor of Elementary Education graduates correlates licensure performance, thus, students need to increase content understanding about professional education classes and familiarize in general education courses [31] while professional education predicts Bachelor of Secondary Education group's licensure performance particularly Mathematics majors [32]. The result shows that only major field of specialization is significantly correlated with the high school performance of the aspirant CTE students. This reflects that high school grades is not strong enough to be considered as major requirement for qualifying students in the course as compared to placement test which is more objective and aligned with the necessary competencies needed in college [33].

On the other hand, the findings are not extended in terms of determining whether high school academic performance is not a predictor of college completion in contrast with the findings presented in literature [34] or whether admission tests scores are not predictive of academic performance [35]. Based on

the findings, the role of high school academic performance on the entry-level is only implicated to the prospect major field of specialization of aspirant educators but not in other parameters such as general education and professional education. Since that interest is one of the factors in selecting major field of specialization [36], students pay more attention to this learning area over the other two areas (general education and professional education). In addition, results give attention on the need for additional tools to determine the readiness of aspirant education students in general and professional education courses to strengthen admission to the program which is believed to be associated with better HEI performance [37].

4. CONCLUSION

This study examines the readiness of aspirant teacher education students using their academic performance during their senior high school (grade) and their entrance examination results. Based on the findings, aspirant students' academic performance during senior high school is at the outstanding level. However, it does not match to their entrance examination results in the three main components of examination for teacher education students namely: general education, professional education, and major field of specialization. For this reason, it is concluded that obtaining high academic records during high school does not guarantee of obtaining high entrance examination rating but correlation shows academic performance contributes on the entrance examination rating particularly in major field of specializations. Given these findings, it is recommended to contextualize the general education and professional education qualifying examination to make it more suitable for the program to be taken by the students. Results also create an opportunity for opening of short course program and some related activities for the college to prepare aspirant teachers in the teaching profession as early as they pass the admission requirements.

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Name of Author	C	M	So	Va	Fo	I	R	D	O	E	Vi	Su	P	Fu
Jessa A. Roman	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Adriel G. Roman	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓

C : **C**onceptualization
M : **M**ethodology
So : **So**ftware
Va : **Va**lidation
Fo : **Fo**rmal analysis
I : **I**nvestigation
R : **R**esources
D : **D**ata Curation
O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft
E : Writing - Review & **E**diting
Vi : **Vi**sualization
Su : **Su**pervision
P : **P**roject administration
Fu : **Fu**nding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

Authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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BIOGRAPHIES OF AUTHORS

Jessa A. Roman is an Instructor I at the Laguna State Polytechnic Universiy. She was a graduate of Doctor of Philosophy major in Educational Leadership and Management at the Laguna State Polytechnic University, Philippines in 2023. She is also a graduate school lecturer at the same university. Her research involvement focused on social sciences, research and development, and human resource management. She can be contacted at email: jessa.roman@lspu.edu.ph.

Adriel G. Roman is an accredited full-fledged professor in the College of Teacher Education at the Laguna State Polytechnic University, Laguna, Philippines. he was designated as the chairperson for alumni affairs and placement services as well as the senior high school coordinator in 2016, director for planning and development of the Laguna State Polytechnic University in 2019-2023, and currently the associate dean of the College of Teacher Education. He completed his Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Rizal System, Morong, Rizal, Philippines. His research interests focused on mathematics education, assessment of learning, and research development. He can be contacted at email: adriel.roman@lspu.edu.ph.