

The Impact of the Students' Performance in the Comprehensive Examination on Their Thesis-Writing

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Abstract

The complexity of the tedious process of thesis-writing stimulated anxiety among graduate students, especially when the thesis has to be written in a second language (Ebadi et al., 2019; Sadeghi & Shirzad Khajepasha, 2015); and necessitating reasoning and critical thinking skills (Dowd et al., 2018). However, the completion of a thesis is indispensable in graduate education and no student can receive a diploma in post-graduate without undergoing the rigidity of thesis-writing which some students found ease while others consider as hindrance. Thus, in the hope of removing the threats and challenges in thesis-writing, Faryadi (2019) provided a systematic approach in writing the methodology, results, and conclusion in thesis-writing in consideration of their difficulty as experienced by the graduate students; Lin (2017) explored constructive strategies on how to give effective and efficient course in thesis-writing; Alvarez & Anglat (2019) suggested interventions shared in the virtual peer feedback; and Odena (2017) considered the sources of facilitating experiences and strategies. The relevance of achieving the standards on the varied competencies placed by the HEIs on their graduate students ensures that their graduation from the program automatically earned their competitiveness in the global job market. Moreover, Bishop and Mane (2005) found out that necessitating higher number of academic credits for graduation and setting the minimum competency help the graduates succeed in the labor market.

The main concern of the study was to assess the impact of the students' performance in the comprehensive examination on their thesis-writing. The study utilized a descriptive correlational research design which accessed universal sampling of students in the Master of Arts in Education during the school year 2018-2019 in the Graduate School in a private higher educational institution (HEI) in Bulacan.

Keywords: comprehensive examination, Graduate School, students' performance, thesis-writing

I. Introduction

Writing can be an inherent talent or developed as an acquired skill; thus, in the post-graduate education, the writing of a thesis challenges the students (Han, 2014) for a semester, for a school year, and even for years. Thesis-writing is writing in the development of knowledge (Lindsay, 2015). The complexity of the tedious process of thesis-writing stimulated anxiety among graduate students, especially when the thesis has to be written in a second language (Ebadi et al., 2019; Sadeghi & Shirzad Khajepasha, 2015); and necessitating reasoning and critical thinking skills (Dowd et al., 2018). However, the completion of a thesis is indispensable in graduate education and no student can receive a diploma in post-graduate without undergoing the rigidity of thesis-writing which some students found ease while others consider as hindrance. Thus, in the hope of removing the threats and challenges in thesis-writing, Faryadi (2019) provided a systematic approach in writing the methodology, results, and conclusion in thesis-writing in consideration of their difficulty as experienced by the graduate students; Lin (2017) explored constructive strategies on how to give effective and efficient course in thesis-writing; Alvarez & Anglat (2019) suggested interventions shared in the virtual peer feedback; and Odena (2017) considered the sources of facilitating experiences and strategies.

On the other hand, the Commission on Higher Education standardized the minimum competencies in graduate education, while the higher educational institutions set parameters in maintaining the pursuit for better outcomes. Although Duchardt, Furr, and Horton (2016) made a study limited in graduate education among education students, they upheld that graduate students need to model clear and effective mastery of writing, as well as, knowledge and skills expected in their work settings. The relevance of achieving the standards on the varied competencies placed by the HEIs on their graduate students ensures that their graduation from the program automatically earned their competitiveness in the global job market. Moreover, Bishop and Mane (2005) found out that necessitating higher number of academic credits for graduation and setting the minimum competency help the graduates succeed in the labor market.

This study was, therefore, motivated by the pre-requisite of the satisfactory students' performance in their comprehensive examination. It is interesting to assess the impact of the students' performance in the comprehensive examination on the thesis-writing of the Graduate School students in the Master of Arts in Education.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Bigg's Model of Constructive Alignment (Poole, 2013) which discussed the shifts in the expectations regarding the entrance criteria and graduation attributes in graduate education. The learning journey of varying lengths and nature from entrance to outcomes added the entrance requirements. It aims to chart the journey of graduate education from start to end. The variation in length of the learning journeys can engender frustrations, disappointments, and helplessness. The model takes consideration of student-

centeredness and outcomes-focus and starts with the entrance requirements considering, among other things, the entry competencies of the graduate student. The expected student outcomes include the attainment of the minimum competencies in higher education which positioned the graduates to global competitiveness.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the study. The independent variable, which was the completion of the academic requirements included the following subjects: research, statistics, and major subjects. On the other hand,

the dependent variable, which is thesis-writing included the following ratings: exemplary, proficient, accomplished, emerging, beginner, and failed.

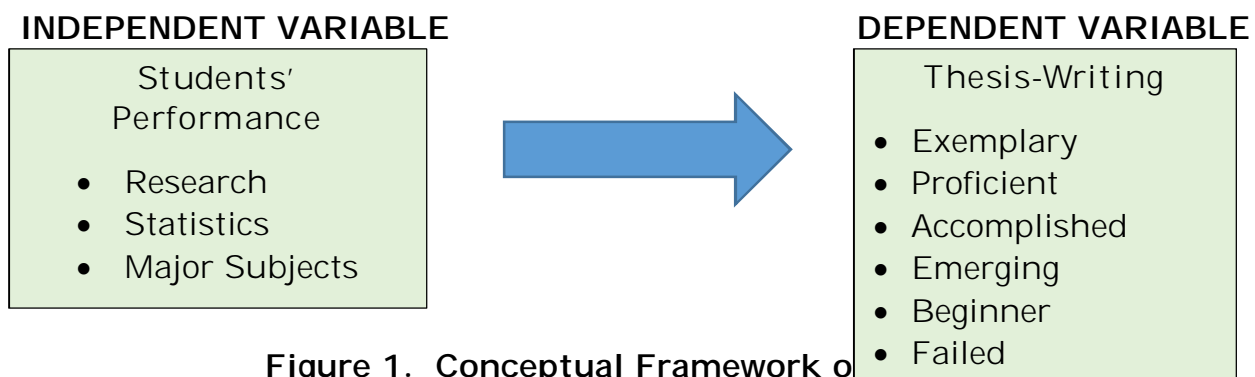


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Statement of the Problem

The main concern of the research was to assess the significant impact of the students' performance in the comprehensive examination on their thesis-writing.

Specifically, the researcher aimed to find the answers to the following questions:

1. How can the students' performance in the comprehensive examination in the Master of Arts in Education be described based on the following subjects:
 - 1.1 Research;
 - 1.2 Statistics; and
 - 1.3 Major Subjects?

2. How can thesis-writing of the students in the Graduate School be described in terms of the following ratings:
 - 2.1 Exemplary;
 - 2.2 Proficient;
 - 2.3 Accomplished;
 - 2.4 Emerging;
 - 2.5 Beginner; and
 - 2.6 Failed?
3. Does the student's performance in the comprehensive examination exert a significant impact on their thesis-writing?
4. What implications in Graduate School education can be drawn based on the findings of the study?

Hypothesis of the Study

The hypothesis of the study was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

"The students' performance in the comprehensive examination does not exert a significant impact on their thesis-writing."

II. Methodology of the Study

Methods and Techniques of the Study

A descriptive correlational method was utilized in the study. Creswell (2015) discussed that a descriptive research included the researcher's interest, process, meaning, and understanding of words or pictures; thus making a descriptive research qualitative in its method. Since the descriptive research employs qualitative method, it is considered relevant to the present research which involves data collection for describing the existing situation. The design of this study was descriptive since the researcher collected facts through the survey questionnaire to obtain an accurate description of the existing status of the completion of the academic requirements and the performance in the comprehensive examination. The researcher, also, exerted efforts to assess the relationship of the independent variable to the dependent variable. Moreover, the design of the study provided a systematic, factual, and accurate description, as well as, a deeper insight into the impact of the students' performance on the thesis-writing of the Graduate School students. Also, the researcher utilized the qualitative method which was based on the data provided by the responses gathered from the survey questionnaire and not about the number.

Respondents of the Study

The locale of the study was the Graduate School at a private higher educational institution (HEI) in the Province of Bulacan. The choice of respondents was based on the efforts of the department in assessing the correlation between the completion of the academic requirements and the thesis-writing at the Graduate School.

The study accessed the universal sampling of the total population of forty-eight (48) graduate school students in the Master of Arts in Education who underwent the thesis-writing during the School Year 2018-2019.

Data Processing and Statistical Treatment

The descriptive correlational research assessed the gathered data and processed them through a documentary analysis of the quantitative data on the completion of the academic requirements and thesis-writing of the graduate students. The completion of the academic requirements was based on the grade point average (GPA) of the students in their core, major, and cognate subjects which were described as follows: *Exemplary* (1.00 -1.24); *Proficient* (1.25-1.49); *Accomplished* (1.50 – 1.74); *Emerging* (1.75 – 1.99); *Beginner* (2.00); and *Failed* (2.25 below). On the other hand, thesis-writing was described based on their rating obtained after their final defense of the thesis as follows: *Exemplary* (1.00 - 1.24); *Proficient* (1.25-1.49); *Accomplished* (1.50 – 1.74); *Emerging* (1.75 – 1.99); *Beginner* (2.00); and *Failed* (2.25 below). A regression analysis was utilized to assess the significant relationship of the completion of the academic requirements in Graduate School on their thesis-writing. This produced quantitative data resulting from the documentary analysis of forty-eight (48) total population of graduate students in the Master of Arts in Education in a private higher educational institution in Bulacan during the Academic Year 2018-2019.

III. Results and Discussion

Problem 1. The Students' Performance in their Comprehensive Examination

The students in the Graduate School in a private higher educational institution in Bulacan during the academic year 2018-2019 were described in terms of the results of the comprehensive examination in the following subjects: core, major, and cognate.

Research. Table 1 presents the students' performance in the comprehensive examination in Research at the Graduate School of the Master of Arts in Education during the academic year 2018 – 2019.

Table 1

Students' Performance in the Comprehensive Examination in Research during AY 2018-2019

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
1.00-1.24 (Exemplary)	1	2.1
1.25-1.49 (Proficient)	3	6.3
1.50-1.74 (Accomplished)	29	60.4
1.75-1.99 (Emerging)	11	22.9
2.0 - (Beginner)	4	8.3
2.25 below-(Failed)	0	0.0
Total	48	100.0
Mean = 1.57 (Accomplished)		
Std. Deviation = .19946		

Table 1 revealed the *accomplished* students' performance in the comprehensive examination in Research of the students in the Master of Arts in Education during the academic year 2018 – 2019 as shown by a Mean score of 1.57 and a Standard Deviation of .19946. Specifically, it showed 2.1% (1 out of 48) with *exemplary* performance; 6.3% (3 out of 48) with *proficient* performance; 60.4% (29 out of 48) with *accomplished* performance; 22.9% (11 out of 48) with *emerging* performance; and 8.3% (4 out of 48) with *beginner* performance. No one (0%) of the students *failed*. Most of the students were *accomplished* (1.50-1.74) in their performance in the comprehensive examination in Research.

Statistics. Table 2 presents the students' performance in the students' performance in the comprehensive examination in Statistics at the Graduate School of the Master of Arts in Education during the academic year 2018 – 2019.

Table 2

Students' Performance in the Comprehensive Examination in Statistics during AY 2018-2019

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
1.00-1.24 (Exemplary)	0	0.0
1.25-1.49 (Proficient)	3	6.3
1.50-1.74 (Accomplished)	25	52.1
1.75-1.99 (Emerging)	15	31.3
2.0 - (Beginner)	5	10.4
2.25 below-(Failed)	0	0.0
Total	48	100.0
Mean = 1.61 (Accomplished)		
Std. Deviation = .19267		

Table 2 revealed the *accomplished* performance in the comprehensive examination of the students at the Graduate School during the academic year 2018 – 2019 as shown by a Mean score of 1.61 and a Standard Deviation of .19267. Specifically, it showed 6.3% (3 out of 48) with *proficient* performance; 52.1% (25 out of 48) with *accomplished* performance; 31.3% (15 out of 48) with *emerging* performance; and 10.4% (5 out of 48) with *beginner* performance. No one (0%) of the students *failed*. Most of the students were *accomplished* (1.50 – 1.74) in their performance in the comprehensive examination in Statistics.

Major Subjects. Table 3 presents the students' performance in the comprehensive examination in major subjects at the Graduate School of the Master of Arts in Education during the academic year 2018 – 2019.

Table 3

Students' Performance in the Comprehensive Examination in Major Subjects during AY 2018-2019

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
1.00-1.24 (Exemplary)	3	6.3
1.25-1.49 (Proficient)	11	22.9
1.50-1.74 (Accomplished)	21	43.8
1.75-1.99 (Emerging)	4	8.3
2.0 - (Beginner)	9	18.8
2.25 below-(Failed)	0	0.0
Total	48	100.0
Mean = 1.52 (Accomplished)		
Std. Deviation = .28824		

Table 3 revealed the *accomplished* performance in the comprehensive examination in the major subjects of the students in the Master of Arts in Education during the academic year 2018 – 2019 as shown by a Mean score of 1.52 and a Standard Deviation of .28824. Specifically, it showed 6.3% (3 out of 48) with *exemplary* performance; 22.9% (11 out of 48) with

proficient performance; 43.8% (21 out of 48) with *accomplished* performance; 8.3% (4 out of 48) with *emerging* performance; and 18.8% (9 out of 48) with *beginner* performance. No one (0%) of the students *failed* in their performance in the comprehensive examination in the major subjects. Most of the students were *accomplished* (1.50-1.74) in their performance in the comprehensive examination in the major subjects.

Students' Performance in the Comprehensive Examination. Table 4 presents the performance in the comprehensive examination Graduate School of the students in the Master of Arts in Education during the academic year 2018 – 2019.

Table 4

Students' Performance in the Comprehensive Examination during AY 2018-2019

Subjects	Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Research	1.57	Accomplished
Statistics	1.61	Accomplished
Major Subjects	1.52	Accomplished
Grand Mean =	1.57	Accomplished

Table 4 revealed the *accomplished* performance in the comprehensive examination of the students in the Master of Arts in Education during the academic year 2018 – 2019 as shown by a Grand Mean score of 1.57. Specifically, it showed an *accomplished* (1.57) performance in the comprehensive

examination in Research; an *accomplished* (1.61) performance in the comprehensive examination in Statistics; and an *accomplished* (1.52) performance in the comprehensive examination in the major subjects. The best *accomplished* performance of the students in the comprehensive examination in the Master of Arts in Education was in Statistics as shown by the Mean score of

1.61, while their least *accomplished* performance in the comprehensive examination was in the Major Subecrs as shown by a Mean score of 1.52.

Problem 2. Thesis-Writing of the Students in the Graduate School

Table 5 shows the *proficiency* in thesis writing of the students in the Master of Arts in Education during the academic year 2018- 2019 as revealed by the Mean score of 1.45 and a Standard Deviation of .20842. Furthermore, it can be gleaned from the table that the students earned the following ratings: 8.3% or 4 out of 48 as *exemplary*; 16.7% or 8 out of 48 as *proficient*; 60.4% or 29 out of 48 as *accomplished*; 12.5% or 6 out of 48 as *emerging*; 2.1% or 1 out of 48 as *beginner* rating and no one (0%) *failed* in the thesis-writing. The most number of graduate students were rated as *accomplished* (1.50 – 1.74) in thesis-writing, while the least number of graduate students was rated as *beginner* (2.00).

Table 5

Thesis writing of the MAEd Students During the AY 2018-2019

Indicators	Frequency	Percentage
1.00-1.24 (Exemplary)	4	8.3
1.25-1.49 (Proficient)	8	16.7
1.50-1.74 (Accomplished)	29	60.4
1.75-1.99 (Emerging)	6	12.5
2.0 - (Beginner)	1	2.1
2.25 below-(Failed)	0	0.0
Total	48	100.0
Mean = 1.45 (Proficient)		
Std.Deviation = .20842		

Problem 3. The Impact of the Students' Performance in the Comprehensive Examination on their Thesis-Writing

Table 6 shows the regression analysis of the impact of the students' performance in the comprehensive examination on the thesis-writing of the MAEd students at the Graduate School.

Results of the regression analysis revealed that the students' performance in the comprehensive examination in statistics has a relationship to thesis-writing but not to a significant extent as evidenced by the Beta coefficients of 0.182, while their performance in the comprehensive examination in research and

the major subjects shows their relationship to thesis-writing to be significant as shown by the Beta coefficients of 0.046 and 0.051 with p-values which do not exceed the .05 alpha. The B coefficient values signify that in every unit increase in the student's performance in the comprehensive examination in research, statistics, and major subjects in the Master of Arts in Education will mean 0.048, 0.197, and 0.37 respective increase in the rating of thesis-writing of the respondents.

However, the obtained F-ratio of .805 was found significant since the associated probability of .498 greatly exceeds the .05 alpha. The results suggested that performance in the comprehensive examination of the respondents were found to be significant predictors of their rating in thesis-writing. Thus, the study *accepted* the null hypothesis which states that *"the students' performance in the comprehensive examination does not exert a significant impact on their thesis-writing."*

Table 6

Regression analysis of the impact of the students' performance in the comprehensive examination on their thesis-writing

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.008	0.31		3.255	0.002
Research result	0.048	0.18	0.046	0.268	0.79
Statistics result	0.197	0.196	0.182	1.004	0.321
Major result	0.037	0.113	0.051	0.326	0.746
R-squared = .052					
F-value = .805					
p-value = .498					
alpha = 0.05					

Problem 4. Implications in graduate education drawn from the results of the study

Based on the findings of the study, the following implications in graduate education were drawn:

- That the graduate students pursue to exemplify in their performance in the comprehensive examination;
- That the students in graduate education vary widely from a rating of exemplary to beginner in their thesis-writing competencies;
- That the students may be accomplished in their performance in comprehensive examination but may not show similar rating on their thesis-writing; and
- That there are contributory factors in the attainment of an exemplary rating in thesis-writing other than their cognitive and writing skills.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The following conclusions and recommendations were arrived at after analyzing the results and findings presented by the gathered data.

1. The students of the Graduate School in the private HEI revealed an accomplished performance in their comprehensive examination. Although several difficulties and hurdles are encountered in the tedious process of balancing school and work, students at the Graduate School pursue to pass their comprehensive examination.
2. Most of the students attained accomplishment in thesis-writing which revealed the acquisition of the minimum competencies required in the graduate education. However, although no one failed in thesis-writing, it is interesting to trace the factors contributory to the small percentage of students who were rated as beginner in thesis-writing.
3. The students' performance in the comprehensive examination does not exert a significant impact on their thesis-writing.
4. There are implications on graduate education drawn from the findings of this study which could guide both the teachers and the students succeeding in the academic requirements and thesis-writing.

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