

Learning Environment and the Comprehensive Examination of Nursing Students

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ABSTRACT

The atmosphere of the classroom environment embodies an affective tone in which teaching and learning take place. The aim of this study was to find out the relationship of the learning environment and comprehensive examination results of Tagum Doctors' College Nursing students for school year 2009-2010. This study utilized a descriptive-correlation design of research. Pertinent data were collated through the use of the researcher-made questionnaires as the data-gathering tool and the level comprehensive examination results. The respondents of this study were the 35 first and 50 second-year students enrolled in Tagum Doctors' College, Inc. A complete enumeration was used in identifying the respondents since the same students went through the mandatory exam given by the school, to assess their level of knowledge of both general, special education issues and their specialty area. Using pearson r product moment correlation, findings revealed that there is no significant relationship between the extent of learning environment and the level of comprehensive examination result of both first- year and second-year nursing students in Tagum Doctors' College. This implies that the learning environment does not affect the level of comprehensive examination result of nursing students. This would mean that assessment is not a just a test but can be reflected in the learning process.

Keywords - Learning environment, comprehensive examination, descriptive-correlation design of research, Nursing students, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

School administrators should help teachers in making a high-achieving learning environments for all students, where the most progressive curriculum and instruction practices combine to assess learning. In a high-achieving learning environment, teachers involve students in complex problem solving and discovering ideas and issues, and classroom undertakings draw on students' culture, experiences, and knowledge. At-risk students, in particular, need environments that employ them in realistic tasks and offer them vital chances for the development of knowledge (Williams, 1994).

According to experts in the field of education, managing school and classroom aims to encourage and establish student self-discipline through a process of encouraging positive student achievement and behavior. Thus, student achievement, teacher efficacy, and teacher and student performance are directly linked with the idea of school and classroom management (Froyen & Iverson, 1999).

However, a comprehensive examination should be the student's opportunity to reflect on what she/he has learned and to demonstrate how her/his knowledge and skills will contribute to her/his own research and practice. Steen (1999) reported that over the years, having obtained unsatisfactory results in comprehensive exams, many changes in departmental offerings and requirements were made. In Mathematics, abstract algebra and real variables were required when it became clear (from oral exam answers like the one mentioned above) that students were not getting a sufficiently rigorous theoretical background in mathematics. More active learning in the classroom was moved, to help students become better able to handle the material.

In the Philippines, promoting quality education, taking necessary actions in ensuring that quality education shall be accessible to all is a directive. It is also a mandate to make sure and protect academic freedom for the continuing academic growth, the development of learning and research, producing responsible and effective leaders and making sure to produce high level professionals, and to enrich historical and cultural heritage (CHED, 2010).

But there were accusations on the alleged ineptness of the Commission which stemmed from the report that in a seven-year period (2001-2008), the number of

takers who failed in licensure exams exceeded the number of board passers by as much as 1.42 million or about 64 percent. The reports reveal that only 808,884 (36.35 percent) out of the 2,225,571 examinees for the period has passed the test. The problem is compounded by the fact that of the existing 1,741 HEI's in the country, only 50 or 3 percent have good facilities (Malipot, 2010).

In Tagum Doctors' College, the commitment to quality education is clear by following the vision, mission and goals of the school. One knows for a fact that not all practice settings can provide Nursing students with a positive learning environment. In maximizing Nursing students' clinical learning outcomes, it is necessary to examine the learning environment. The school is conducting a yearly assessment on all the subjects covered for the nursing course and that all students in all year level will take the exams. This will be the basis for the students' academic report whether he/she will continue the Nursing program or not.

It is in this context that the researcher pursued this study which is to assess the learning environment of Tagum Doctors' College, Tagum City, Philippines wherein the classroom relatedness was measured by, first, assessing the teacher-student relationships, second, peer relationships, third, home-school relationships, fourth, physical and instructional environment and its impact to the comprehensive examination result of the students.

This study is anchored on the theory of Nuttall (2006) which states that a high collaboration among school officials (administrators, faculty, administrative support, non-teaching personnel) and parents would produce high student achievement, high graduation rates, and high attendance. The latter may be the most difficult to integrate into the collaborative process. They often face difficulties in participating to school activities, like, limited financial resources, negative past experiences with schooling, and linguistic and cultural differences. Teachers also face problems in involving parents, like, lack of time and money for family outreach, fear of conflict and typecasts about families and cultures. It was also proven that students are considerably more likely to be successful when parents are actively involved in their children's academic endeavour.

The paradigm shows the variables of the study. The independent variable is the learning environment in Tagum Doctors' College which will focus on the six indicators, namely: a) teacher – student relationships; b) peer relationship; c) home-school relationships; d) physical environment; and e) instructional environment. The dependent variable is the comprehensive exam result of the Nursing students in school year 2009-2010. This comprehensive examination is a reliable and valid tool of assessment of the critical skills of the students and

may be useful for the formal assessment of readiness for practice. Data were taken from the RLE coordinator's office. The gender and year level moderate the two variables.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study aimed to determine the relationship of the learning environment and comprehensive examination results of Tagum Doctors' College Nursing students.

METHODOLOGY

The research design used in this study was the descriptive correlation method. This was used to determine the relationship between two variables. Also, it was used in collecting the data in order to test the hypothesis through a questionnaire.

The descriptive method described the extent of the learning environment in Tagum Doctors' College, Inc. This study employed the correlational research design as established by Rybarova (2006) wherein two variables are measured and recorded for each individual and the measurements are then reviewed to identify any patterns of relationship that exist between the two variables and to measure the strength of their relationship, whether a positive or a negative relationship will come out. As a result, thus this study aimed at determining whether the learning environment affects the comprehensive examination results of the Nursing students.

The respondents of this study were the first and second-year students enrolled in Tagum Doctor's College, Inc. A complete enumeration was used in identifying the respondents, since the same students went through the mandatory exam given by the school, to assess their level of knowledge of both general, special education issues and their specialty area.

The research instrument used in gathering the data was the researcher-made questionnaire to focus on the relevant indicators. The questionnaire dealt with the classroom relatedness that would assess students' perceptions of teacher-student relationships, peer relationships, and home-school relationships and at same the perceived competence in the classroom by assessing their academic self-efficacy, self-determination and behavioral self-control.

The researcher formulated the questionnaire and had it validated by the three (3) experts for its content validity and it also revealed 82% reliable using test-

retest reliability. A letter asking permission to conduct a study was sent to the School President. Upon receipt of the approved letter, the researcher furnished a copy of the approved letter to the year level coordinators of the school. Also, an approval of the school head was needed to get the result of the comprehensive exam of the students. When the request was granted, the researcher had personally conducted the survey questionnaire to the respondents of the study. Prior to the answering of questionnaires, instruction was given to ensure honest, clear, and complete answer. After the respondents had answered the questionnaire, it was personally retrieved. All responses of the respondents were checked, collated, and consolidated in the Microsoft Excel File. The said file was submitted to the statistician for statistical analysis to seek answers to the problems raised in the first section of this research.

In compliance to research ethics protocol, informed consent was obtained from the respondents. The statistical tools utilized in this research work are Average Weighted Mean; Mean; T-test; Pearson r or Product Moment Correlation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Learning Environment in Tagum Doctors' College

Table 1 illustrates the level of learning environment in Tagum Doctors' College. The physical environment got the highest mean, followed by the Peer relationship, Instructional environment, teacher – student relationships and home – school relationship. All of the indicators have the same descriptive equivalent of high which means that the level of learning environment in Tagum Doctors' College is very satisfactory.

The result can be supported by the study of Higgins (2005) which states that building condition, student performance and achievement conclude that the quality of the physical environment significantly affects student academic success. There is adequate study to state without anticipation that the building in which students spends a good deal of their time learning does in fact influence how well they learn.

In addition, Boykin et al. (2005) stated that first, surrounded by peers and often living away from home, college students experience freedom from parental control, which is often demonstrated by using alcohol in college.

Table 1. Level of learning environment in Tagum Doctors College

Learning Environment	Mean	Description
Teacher-Student Relationships	3.83	High
Peer Relationship	4.17	High
Home-School Relationship	3.82	High
Physical Environment	4.18	High
Instructional Environment	3.97	High
Over-all Mean	3.99	High

Level of Comprehensive Examination Result

As shown in Table 2, the level of comprehensive examination result of the first-year nursing students has a mean of 79.89 with the description of satisfactory.

The result shows that with the above average level of performance, first-year Nursing students have met all the academic responsibilities in this area. This can be supported by Huba (2000) who confirmed that learning is the focus and ultimate goal of the learner-centered paradigm of the students. Because of this, in shifting to a learner-centered approach, assessment plays a key role. In assessing the students' academic performance, the questions are forced such, "What and how well have they learned it?" "How successful teachers have been at what they are trying to achieve?" Because of this focus on learning, assessment in higher education is sometimes referred to as outcome-based assessment.

Table 2. Level of comprehensive examination result of first-year nursing students

	Mean	Description
Level of Comprehensive Examination Result	79.89	Satisfactory

Legend:

92-100 – Outstanding;

84-91– Very Satisfactory;

76-83 – Satisfactory;

68-75 – Fair;

67-below – Low

As shown in Table 3, the level of comprehensive examination result of the second-year nursing students has a mean of 76.18 with the description of

satisfactory. The result shows that with the above average level of performance, the second-year Nursing students have met all the academic responsibilities in this area.

It just shows that the assessment takes part in improving teaching and learning in academic advising at the individual, course, program and institutional levels, thus, assessment should be on-going, consistently applied, and based on teaching and learning goals and objectives. Each academic program should use information from assessment in interpreting and analyzing for the improvement of the effectiveness of its academic programs in such areas as curriculum, academic advisement, and faculty development and student services.

Table 3. Level of comprehensive examination result of second-year nursing students

	Mean	Description
Level of Comprehensive Examination Result	76.18	Satisfactory

Legend:

92 - 100 – Outstanding;

84 - 91 – Very Satisfactory;

76 - 83 – Satisfactory;

68 - 75 – Fair;

67 - below – Low

Relationship between the Level of Learning Environment and the Level of Comprehensive Examination Result of Nursing Students

The result revealed that there is no significant relationship between the extent of learning environment and the level of comprehensive examination result of both first and second-year nursing students. This implies that the learning environment does not affect the level of comprehensive examination result of nursing students. This would mean that assessment is not a just a test but can be reflected in the learning process. It is performance-based, seamless, generative, and on-going process which students need multiple opportunities to demonstrate their learning.

CONCLUSIONS

The study revealed that the level of learning environment in Tagum Doctors' College is high. The level of comprehensive examination result of the first and second- year nursing students is above average. There is no significant difference on the level of learning environment when analyzed by gender and year level. There is no significant difference on the level of comprehensive examination result when analyzed by gender. There is no significant relationship between the extent of learning environment and the level of comprehensive examination result of the first year and second year Nursing students in Tagum Doctors College.

The above results would somehow need a specific understanding of what constitutes learning environment and quality education as necessary aspects of any strategic and long-term approach to ensuring the academic performance of the students. There must have a provision of quality teachers which is necessary also in ensuring a shared commitment in dealing with the students regardless of gender and year level, thus to develop and support teacher quality. Moreover, it is increasingly identified and recognized what effective teachers know, in an effective learning environment and value as an important step in enhancing student's academic performance that would be evidenced on the result of the comprehensive examination.

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