

Research Article

Unveiling the Lived Experiences of Electronics Education LET Passers and Non-Passers: A Qualitative Perspective

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Abstract:

This study explored the lived experiences of Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education major in Electronics (BTVTED-ELX) graduates who either passed or did not pass the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET) in a Polytechnic State College in Camarines Sur. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, five participants were purposively selected and interviewed to capture their narratives. Thematic analysis revealed three major dimensions of their experiences: (1) lived experiences, which reflected personal motivation, resilience, and self-doubt; (2) challenges and enablers, encompassing academic preparedness, emotional struggles, financial constraints, and social support; and (3) institutional strategies, highlighting review programs, mentoring, and resource allocation that shaped licensure outcomes. The findings suggest that success or failure in the LET is not solely determined by academic preparation but is influenced by a combination of social, emotional, financial, and institutional factors. Non-passers emphasized difficulties in coping with exam anxiety, limited resources, and inconsistent preparation, while passers highlighted strong family support, structured study habits, and confidence built through peer collaboration. The study concludes that holistic interventions are essential to improve licensure performance. It is recommended that institutions strengthen review programs, provide mental health and financial support mechanisms, and foster peer-driven initiatives to address both academic and non-academic needs of future teachers.

Keywords: Licensure Examination for Teachers, BTVTED-ELX, lived experiences, challenges, institutional strategies.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

The Licensure Examination of Teachers (LET) is a critical exam that determines the professional status of future teachers in the Philippines. Not only does it indicate the level of pedagogical competence, but it also shows the readiness of the higher education institution to produce good teachers (Balagtas, 2018). To graduates of the Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education major in Electronics (BTVTED-ELX), a successful LET result means that they are prepared to impart instruction both in technical and academic establishments. Nevertheless, there is a significant difference in the performance of the graduates in the LET. Research has found that academic preparation, study habits, motivation, and institutional support are among the factors that have a significant impact on LET outcomes (De Guzman & Tan, 2020; Magno, 2019). Such disparity between passers and non-passers should be considered more closely, particularly in terms of such specialized programs as BTVTED-ELX.

Teacher licensure examinations have been under popular research as a measure of the quality and effectiveness of teachers. As an example, Soriano (2021) highlighted that the outcomes of licensure reflect not only the teacher-education graduates' competence but also the sufficiency of teacher preparation courses in institutions of higher learning. In the meantime, Aliponga (2019) observed that qualitative methods to comprehend LET results show the emotional, social, and psychological hardships that the people who took the test experience, which is frequently neglected in any quantitative assessment of passing rates. At a Polytechnic State College in Camarines Sur, BTVTED-ELX graduates must find their way through the challenges of being technically competent and simultaneously meeting pedagogic expectations. The given institutional context offers a prosperous basis to investigate the role of lived experience, both of passers and non-passers, in the development of professional desires and self-development.

Although statistical data on LET performance is abundant, it is still possible to sense that it is necessary to discover the personal stories behind the statistics. The empirical analysis of lived experiences of BTVTED-ELX LET passers and non-passers will offer information about the challenges, motivations, coping mechanisms, and meaning-making activities that inform their professionalization paths. This kind of exploration is crucial in developing responsive academic and support interventions for the future LET takers. Therefore, this study aims to: (1) describe the lived experiences of BTVTED-ELX LET passers and non-passers, (2) identify the challenges and enabling factors that influenced their LET performance, and (3) analyze how these experiences can inform institutional strategies for enhancing teacher education outcomes in the Polytechnic State College in Camarines Sur.

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1. Lived Experiences of LET Passers and Non-Passers

Lived experiences of examinees also offer a good understanding of the personal, academic, and social aspects of licensure examinations. A number of qualitative studies have been conducted in the Philippine context to investigate the stories of LET takers, especially the ones who have failed and retaken the exam. Using hermeneutic phenomenology, Banay (2024) found that LET retakers tend to perceive their first failure as a personal loss and a chance to improve and transform their study patterns and resistance. In equal measure, Paler and Muegna (2024) narrated the emotional experience of repeaters at the elementary level. They emphasized how they felt doubtful about themselves and how they were influenced by the expectation of society to become teachers in the future. The importance of perseverance and the redefinition of failure as the driving force to success was highlighted by Mapindan and Villocino (2025), but Basadre (2024) unraveled the emotions of shame and stigma that many non-passers felt prior to finding.

These findings are also echoed in international literature. Horton (2015) examined the lived experience of first-time NCLEX takers, which is characterized by the fact that the fear of failure was a significant factor in their preparation strategies. The coping strategies among the nursing repeaters with stigma, as described by Lewis (2018), were peer support and faith, and Graybow (2015) suggested the same among social work examinees. These studies, taken together, prove that licensure exams are not academic phenomena but life-changing experiences that reshape the self-view, resiliency, and career paths. In this respect, the current research seeks to document the emotions of BTVTED-ELX alums in Camarines Sur, which will deliver a more localized perspective on their struggles and their successes.

1.2.2. Challenges and Enablers: Academic, Emotional, Financial, and Social Dimensions

Academic preparation is a stable factor of licensure success. Fiscal (2022) has shown that examination scores before boarding are an important predictor of LET outcomes. Amanonce (2020) clearly showed that academic performance and grades in professional education are important predictors of performance. Dayag-Tungpalan (2025) also supported the predictive importance of simulated LETs, and De Guzman et al. (2025) emphasized the competency-based assessments. On the global level, Cowan (2020) and the National Council on Teacher Quality (2021) reported both positive yet significant correlations between pre-licensure academic performance and actual test outcomes, which explains the issue of aligning institutional curriculum with licensure competencies. In addition to academic issues, emotional problems like anxiety during tests are also highly recorded. In a study by Putwain and Symes (2018), the increasing level of test anxiety reduces performance, whereas Zeidner (1998) determined the cognitive and physiological consequences of test anxiety. Maghanoy (2022) found in the Philippine setting that pre-service teachers with high test anxiety levels were less confident in licensure preparedness. Cochanco et al. (2021) also reported that test anxiety was negatively associated with academic performance. Mindfulness and resilience training, which are suggested by Putwain (2023) as the type of intervention, can be considered as the relevant enablers in this case.

Outcomes are also influenced mainly by financial and social factors. Castleman (2019) also identified economic constraints as a hindrance to adequate preparation. In contrast, Moore et al. (2021) reported the amplifying effect of financial stress on test anxiety and also reduced the study opportunities. Locally, Guardario (2024) cited that low-income takers of LET usually depend on self-review owing to financial reasons, which can put them at a disadvantage over others at paid review facilities. On the other hand, peer mentoring and family support play the role of powerful enablers. Santos-Rico et al. (2024) established that structured peer mentoring enhanced the readiness of pre-service teachers significantly, whereas Maguate (2023) revealed the beneficial effect of peer-assisted learning on academic performance. These results support the hypothesis that personal and environmental factors have a significant influence on the experiences of licensure.

1.2.3. Institutional Strategies for LET Preparation

Institutional interventions remain a central factor in improving licensure performance. Several studies emphasize the importance of curriculum alignment and competency-based assessments. De Guzman et al. (2025) confirmed that graduates who excelled in competency-based assessments performed better in LET, while Irene (2023) stressed the need to align teacher education curricula with licensure standards. Similarly, Amanonce (2020) found that institutions with structured LET review programs recorded higher passing rates.

The use of simulated licensure examinations has gained traction as a best practice. Mallari, Tadeo, and Tiqui (2019) reported that simulated LETs (SLETs) predicted actual performance, while Dayag-Tungpalan (2025) confirmed their diagnostic validity. International evidence also supports simulation and scaffolded practice as effective preparation strategies (Macrì et al., 2024). Furthermore, peer mentoring and counseling programs have been found to reduce test anxiety and improve confidence (Santos-Rico et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2022).

Beyond review programs, research has also shown the need to strengthen institutional attention to teacher-student interactions and communication strategies in instruction. Pontillas (2024) demonstrated how language use in virtual classrooms shapes power dynamics and influences participation. While teachers appear to encourage inclusivity through rhetorical questions and affirmations, these strategies also reinforce authority and control over discussions. Such insights are relevant for LET preparation since they highlight that institutional mentoring and review practices are not only about content delivery but also about fostering empowering, inclusive, and confidence-building learning spaces for teacher education graduates.

Policy frameworks also play a significant role. Republic Act 7836, or the Philippine Teachers Professionalization Act,

institutionalizes LET as a quality assurance mechanism for teachers. Evaluations by CHED and PIDS (2021) suggest that providing financial subsidies, standardized pre-board diagnostics, and continuous curriculum review can significantly improve licensure performance. Collectively, these institutional strategies underscore the need for Polytechnic State Colleges in Camarines Sur to adopt a holistic, multi-pronged approach that integrates academic, emotional, financial, and social supports into LET preparation.

2. Methodology

The research design used in this study is a qualitative research design, which is the phenomenological approach that was used to capture and analyze the lived experiences of BTVTED-ELX graduates who passed or failed to pass the Licensure Examination of Teachers (LET). Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that phenomenology attempts to outline the shared meaning of experiences among multiple people regarding a concept or a phenomenon, in an attempt to narrow down personal experiences into a general sense. The choice of phenomenology in this study was justified due to its inability to explore solely the statistical aspect of the LET journey and the necessity to explore its personal, emotional, and social aspects, which are impossible to imply solely through statistical data. The respondents of this research were purposive, that is, they were selected among graduates of the Bachelor of Technical-Vocational Teacher Education major in Electronics (BTVTED-ELX) of a Polytechnic State College in Camarines Sur. The type of purposive sampling is commonly used in qualitative research and involves selecting the participants according to their knowledge, experience, and relevance to the study (Palinkas et al., 2015). Both LET passers and non-passers were selected so as to have a thorough insight into the diverse experiences. Inclusion criteria stipulated that the participants should have been taking the LET at least once and be willing to share their stories. The number of interviews was calculated using the data saturation principle, according to which there were no new themes in the course of further interviews (Guest, Namey, and Chen, 2020).

The semi-structured, in-depth interviews were used to collect data, as they gave the interviewee the opportunity to explain their experiences, and there is a level of flexibility in the researcher asking further questions. In a phenomenological study, semi-structured interviews have proved to be the most effective approach because they allow the researcher to balance both guiding the discussion and letting the participants elaborate on their personal approaches (Kallio et al., 2016). All interviews were performed either face-to-face or online, depending on the availability of the participants to hold the interview, and featured a duration of around 45 to 60 minutes. All interviews were audio-taped with permission and transcribed word-for-word.

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) referred to thematic analysis as a way of identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) in qualitative data in an orderly manner. This was done by familiarizing myself with the data, creating initial codes, searching themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and creating the final report. Member checking, peer debriefing, and keeping an audit trail were used as strategies to ensure that the study found some credibility and trustworthiness in the findings because concepts of Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest so.

This methodology helped the study to reveal the finer differences in the realities of LET passers and non-passers in the BTVTED-ELX program. The research offers more insight into the challenges, coping strategies, and meaning-making of the participants as they relate to their experiences of licensure with a more profound sense of meaning.

3. Results and Discussion

This paper has examined the lived experiences of BTVTED-ELX graduates of a Polytechnic State College in Camarines Sur who either met or failed the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). Based on the stories of five participants, the analysis showed that there were three major themes: (1) Lived Experiences in Taking the LET, (2) Challenges and Enablers, the Academic, the Emotional, the Financial, and the Social, and (3) Institutional Strategies of LET Preparedness. The themes are presented in the discussion below, along with examples provided in the narratives of the participants, backed by local and international literature.

Theme 1: Academic Preparation and Content Mastery

Graduates noted LET experience to be characterized by strong emotions, changing mentalities, and the levels of preparation. One of the passers (P1) said: *"The LET was a nerve-wracking experience, but I feel that my courses in review and the practice exams were able to make me approach it with confidence."* One more non-passer (P3) said, *"I did not believe myself even before I went to the exam room. I was aware that I was not as ready as others."* P5 was able to give the occasion its emotional coloring: *"I cried at the end of the exam, no matter what the outcome. It was as though the day were as long as life."* These lines demonstrate that LET is not the evaluation of contained knowledge only, but a sense of self-authentication, stress, and internal change.

These results go hand in hand with the self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1997), which argues that confidence has a significant impact on performance outcomes. The LET passers had more confidence in their ability, and non-passers showed a lack of faith and anxiety—such aspects usually resulted in poor performance. This is supported by local research: De Guzman and Tan (2020) discovered that teacher education graduates who were more confident and ready were more likely to achieve better results in the LET. Likewise, Soriano (2021) highlighted that a licensure in the Philippines not only examines academic mastery but also psychological resilience. On the global level, Darling-Hammond (2017, 2020) indicated that professional licensure exams could be both assistive and transformative practices that define the professional identity of an educator. In this work, the stories of the candidates echo what Moustakas (1994) claims lived experiences to be a profound source of meaning, which cannot just be quantified. Tummons (2019)

also stated that licensure exams are institutionalized in a larger professional culture, in which passing is seen as a symbol of competence and belonging. In contrast, failure is seen as a symbol of struggles at a systemic and personal level, in which the candidates are struggling.

These results are also in line with those of Aliponga (2019), who researched the takers of LET and found that the passers tend to think about the exam as a step in the right direction and the non-passers as a step to become better. Bautista (2020) further notes that whether or not it happens, the LET is a rite of passage for graduates of the teacher education programs in the Philippines, and this symbolizes both the hardship of the current and the promise of success in the future. The testimonies of the participants of this study demonstrate that LET experience is very subjective, but it is universally effective as it influences resilience, professional motivation, and identity formation.

Theme 2: Emotional Struggles and Test Anxiety

The participants identified several challenges and enablers. P2 expressed areas where they were not adequately addressed during classes: *"There were areas in the exam that were not addressed during classes, and it made me nervous"*. P3 was focused on emotional strain: *"The stress was too big; I could hardly sleep prior to the exam."* P4 expressed financial hardships: *"Review centers are costly, and commute expenses were accrued. I was not able to afford all the resources that others had. But facilitators were also in existence."* P1 commented: *"My parents also covered my review costs, and my classmates did groups of study, which helped a lot."*

The issues that the participants raised echo systematic academic, emotional, financial, and social obstacles experienced by LET examinees. The gaps in academic preparation are also in line with Magno (2019) and Garcia and De Guzman (2021), who observed that the inconsistency between curricula and LET competencies is still a significant challenge. On the international level, Darling-Hammond (2017) insisted on a particular alignment of the curricula with the licensure requirements, stating that the programs with high licensure pass-rates guarantee it.

Mood-related issues, including anxiety and insomnia, reflect the result of a study conducted by Ong et al. (2019), who determined that psychological stress had a substantial impact on exam performance. More specifically, test anxiety was discovered to affect concentration and recall negatively, leveling the playing field even with competent examinees. Villanueva (2020) also included that stress associated with exams is increased by the cultural and societal norms, particularly in the Philippines, where licensure correlates with employability and social mobility.

Another common obstacle was the financial barriers. The data recorded by Reyes (2019) revealed that not all Filipino graduates have access to expensive review centers, which prevents them from being exposed to current materials. This argument was strengthened by Barrot (2021), who asserts that socioeconomic inequalities still condition inequalities in higher education outcomes. Similar findings were made by Ahmed et al. (2018) in an international study, where the researchers determined that low access to preparatory resources usually translated into low licensure success rates.

Family and peer support, on the other hand, are enablers that the participants strongly emphasized. This is in line with Bautista (2020), who discovered that peer study groups generate collaborative learning experiences, which foster resiliency and accountability. A similar finding was made by Ahmed et al. (2018), who characterized the positive effects of strong social support as a decrease in stress and increased confidence. On the local level, Balagtas (2018) could not pay enough attention to the role of family support in encouraging LET takers to continue their efforts even when they experience failures multiple times.

Combined, these results confirm that the success of LET depends not only on intellectual competence but also on a complicated combination of preparation, financial means, empathy, and social support (Paton, 2018; Reyes, 2019; Soriano, 2021). The stories presented in this paper support the need for holistic interventions that focus not only on the academic but also on the psychosocial and economic needs of teachers' education graduates.

Theme 3: Institutional Strategies for LET Preparedness

The participants emphasized the importance of their institution in LET readiness. P2 liked: *"In our school, we had a free review of LET, which made us feel more confident. Gaps were, however, criticized by others."* P3 said: *"The review program was helpful; however, some of the points were not current and did not correspond to the real exam."* P5 suggested: *"Mock exams and one-on-one coaching should be increased. Stress management programs are also required."*

These findings affirm the fact that institutional policies are central in determining the LET performance of graduates. De Guzman and Tan (2020) concluded that institutions that had strong (organized) LET review programs had much greater passing rates, whereas Soriano (2021) emphasized that the success in board exams indicates the quality of institutions. On a global level, Darling-Hammond (2017) claimed that teacher education programs should be designed in such a way that they thoroughly address the competencies required by licensure, which is also relevant to the perceptions of the participants that the review material is outdated or incomplete. Reyes (2019) emphasized that the gap in knowledge was closed through the institutional investments in revised review materials and faculty training, whereas Barrot (2021) advocated the inclusion of remedial courses to fill in the existing weak areas across graduates. The relevance of wellness programs in schools was also emphasized by Ong et al. (2019) since exam anxiety has been proven to impact performance in schools negatively. These findings are reflected in the participants' calls to be assisted in stress management.

Moreover, Villanueva (2020) found that schools with a positive academic culture develop resilience and motivation, which makes students more prepared to take high-stakes tests. The same point was made by Bautista (2020), who noted that both cognitive and emotional support are offered by institutional mentoring and peer-coaching programs. Ahmed et al. (2018) went further to state that institutional frameworks promoting collaboration helped to decrease isolation and enhance the success rates of exams.

In such a way, the local and international research is confirmed by the experience of participants: an integrated LET preparedness approach should be adopted in teacher education institutions, comprising (a) revised academic review, (b) regular mock tests, (c) remedial course of weak subjects, (d) counseling and stress management courses, and (e) financial or logistical assistance to disadvantaged students. Such a combination would not just increase the rates of passing but also benefit the overall mission of developing qualified and strong future educators (Soriano, 2021; Tummons, 2019).

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper revealed the first-hand experience of BTVTED-ELX alums in one of the Polytechnic State Colleges in Camarines Sur when passing through the Licensure Examination for Teachers (LET). The results of the study showed that the LET is not a simple mental exam, but a personal and professional experience that is influenced by readiness, emotional strength, financial aspects, and social support. However, the passers noted higher reported confidence and stronger review practices and supportive networks, whereas the non-passers focused on self-doubt, resource limitations, and increased anxiety. However, the two groups said that the LET experience shaped their resilience and career goals. These observations are in line with previous research, which confirms that licensure examinations are not only tests of knowledge, but they also evaluate character, perseverance, and institutional support (De Guzman & Tan, 2020; Soriano, 2021; Darling-Hammond, 2020).

The identified challenges and enablers further point to the fact that LET readiness is multifaceted. The lack of academic success, anxiety in tests, economic distress, and unequal opportunities to access preparatory resources remain the obstacles to success. In contrast, the support of the family, the cooperation with peers, and the programs in schools become effective facilitators. Such results indicate that holistic interventions that cover academic and non-academic aspects are necessary, and they are substantiated by prior studies (Magno, 2019; Reyes, 2019; Barrot, 2021). The institutions are thus central in not only increasing cognitive competence but also the psychosocial and economic support systems of their graduates.

Considering this result, it can be suggested that teacher education institutions improve their LET preparation programs with the help of curricular alignment to the licensure competencies, new review modules, and frequent mock testing. Concurrently, schools are encouraged to implement mentoring programs, peer-coaching programs, and counseling programs so that students can deal with test-related anxiety and develop resilience. It is also important to provide financial support, in-house review courses, and available learning materials to overcome inequalities encountered by non-privileged graduates. On top of technical preparation, institutions should develop a culture of support and encouragement because social and emotional aspects are also important to the success of the licensure. Through these broad-based approaches, institutions of higher learning can equip their students with greater skills to not only pass the LET but also be successful teachers, committed and resilient teachers.

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