

College Preparedness Of K-12 Graduates: The Situation of Pedro A. Arches National High School of Managa, Bansalan, Davao Del Sur

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Abstract — College readiness involves not only academics but emotional preparation, study skills, and time management and can be affected by students' backgrounds. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to investigate perceptions among high school graduates of Davao del Sur and their teachers regarding these students' levels of college readiness. The conceptual framework included Brofenheimer theory, and self-determination social learning theory. Research questions focused on perceptions of students who graduated from a rural school district and secondary teachers' perceptions of these students' levels of college readiness. Data for this qualitative case study were collected through interviews and were analyzed based on common themes. The key findings of this study indicated that students in general are not college ready after completion of secondary education. A college readiness program was identified that could be implemented in secondary schools to better prepare students for college. A professional development training program was developed for K–12 educators regarding the readiness program. The results of this study can assist K-12 rural educators in developing a college readiness program to better prepare students for success throughout college. The results of this study also present potentials for social change through minimizing students' uncertainties, minimizing stress associated with college, endorsing a college culture, increasing college readiness, and promoting college persistence

Keywords — Readiness for college, K to 12 graduates, experiences, benefits, insights of teachers

I. Introduction

Students face several barriers that can prevent them from succeeding in the initial semester in college, including lack of confidence in social interaction, change of learning setting, lack of proper channels to communicate barriers, and being nervous about completing their courses. College teachers and administrators have confirmed that new students face various problems: time management, college navigation, and getting acquainted with learning methods. There are concerns with the level of readiness of secondary rural graduates, which prompted me to focus my research on college readiness of students who graduated from rural schools.

Further research shows that the focus of college readiness programs has been centered in urban areas. According to Howley (2019), much of the work done in creating college readiness programs has been conducted in large urban districts. This leaves a gap in the research regarding how rural schools incorporate college readiness skills into their own curriculum (Howley, 2019). To meet this challenge, many secondary schools have implemented additional programs into their curriculum to improve students' college readiness prior to their graduation.

The intent of this study was to generate information that may assist K–12 educators in developing a college readiness program to better prepare students for success throughout their college years. The approach also presents potential for social change by minimizing students' uncertainties and stress associated with attending college, endorsing a college-going culture, increasing college readiness, and promoting college persistence. The findings from this study may inform the efforts of secondary and postsecondary institutions in their work to improve students' postsecondary transition, retention, and degree completion.

The qualitative study has the following research questions to answer:

1. What are the experiences of senior high school graduates who are studying from a school regarding preparation for college, both academically and socially?
2. What do senior high school graduates wish they had learned during their high school experience to better prepare them for college education, both academically and socially?
3. What are the perceptions of senior high school teachers regarding students' preparation, both academically and socially?

According to Pratt (2019), college readiness can be delineated as the ability of students to be ready to efficiently accomplish credit-bearing school coursework or industry accreditation devoid of remediation, hold the academic abilities and personal motivation needed to carry on and advance in post high school education, besides having recognized career objectives and the required steps to attain them. Nonetheless, Hooker and Brand (2019) articulated the need for readiness to be accompanied by developmental maturity, such as to prosper in the progressively independent domains of post-high-school education, along with the cultural knowledge to comprehend the prospects of the college setting, to academically succeed.

College readiness is essentially dissimilar from high school graduation, because college is different from high school (Conley, 2019). The high school graduation rate in the United States is about 70%, with only about one third of U.S. high school students' graduating ready for college (Hirschman et al., 2019). Furthermore, 40% of all students entering college must take remedial courses. The need to enhance school instructions is presently higher than at any other time in the history of American education.

From the perspective of college preparedness, academic readiness was described as the academic skills and awareness needed by students to prosper in accomplishing college-level studies, while being ‘college prepared’ (Maruyama, 2019). Such readiness has been confirmed to comprise 3 key components: (a) academic abilities; (b) content awareness, as well as; (c) main cognitive mechanisms considered not content-definite, such as reasoning, interpreting, or arguing abilities (West, 2019).

Academic readiness remains a single piece of college-preparedness enigma; however, it is imperative for students to show college readiness, rather than simply being college eligible. Given that the United States’ school systems must evaluate college-preparedness utilizing high stakes consistent test scores, regulated by rigid liability procedures, reduced learning, and teaching settings may correspond to preparedness, although college-readiness will persist, being indefinable as far as high school graduates are concerned (Todd, 2019). Various academic behaviors were associated with aspects of college readiness, signifying student’s self-regulation, self-awareness, and self-assessment, which are all critical for academic merit.

Maruyama (2019) examined the significance of social readiness in improving and supporting college preparedness. More specifically, Maruyama examined how high school students were ready to socially adapt to college environments, their individual enthusiasm and engagement concerning learning, as well as their perceived associations with fellow colleagues and faculty staff (Maruyama, 2019). The students believed that being adequately acquainted with college preparedness courses would increase their social readiness, as far as college preparedness was concerned (Maruyama, 2019).

Arnold et al. (2019) examined the perceptions of freshly enrolled first-years college students regarding college preparedness and social readiness, as well as their capacity to balance academic and extracurricular performances. Those who took college preparedness courses at their high schools were able to balance academic and social activities, while those who never did found it hard to cope with both (Arnold et al., 2019). Arnold et al. further claimed the importance of the impact of guardians or parents in students’ anticipations and experiences concerning college education and social activities.

Social awareness is described as the capacity to take the perception of and relate with others, identify and acknowledge personal and group similarities and dissimilarities, besides identifying and utilizing family, community, and school resources (Maruyama, 2019). A principal feature of social awareness is the capacity to acknowledge and show respect to the perceptions of other people within social interaction settings. Social awareness should equally comprise the capacity to recognize situations whereby social support can act as a resource to deal with problems (Maruyama, 2019).

In addition, researchers discussed cultural, community, and family influences as important facets in college persistence; when students are ready to learn, then they will be willing to carry

on with their courses effectively (Conley, 2019). As such, college readiness increases college persistence (Wardley & Belanger, 2019). Conley and French (2019) discussed an ownership of learning by college learners through offering a description of these pertinent areas: thinking skills, attitudes toward content comprehension, possession of learning skills and practices, as well as contextual understanding. Additionally, Nichols and Valenzuela (2019) wrote about an individual's ability to be self-regulated and ready to work independently through goal completion such as to be an indicator of success in college.

According to Kuh et al. (2021), students in their first learning year confirmed feeling instantly skeptical, besides lacking the capability to deal with finding information associated with class processes and measures. In their study, Kuh et al. equally revealed how learners' non-cognitive and motivational practices are associated with student achievement in college. Equally, Davidson et al. (2019) and Alarcon and Edwards (2019) described the personally-founded and affective aspects of college success, including practical skills, such as time management, housekeeping, and organization. There are also familial influences that have an impact on a new college student. Authors discussed that students' need for parental support regarding the college experience is linked to comfort, success, preparedness, and eventual persistence (Leonard, 2019; Surjadi et al., 2021). Additionally, parents may be very involved in student decision-making about the college going experience and may be considered as an input to situations influencing preparedness (Roderick et al., 2019). Thus, the contribution of parents and guardians in students' readiness and persistence in college education is highly significant.

According to Johnson-Weeks and Superville (2019), "this population is entering higher education underprepared, and few find the necessary support to be successful. Educators are challenged with finding innovative ways to prepare students for college". Stern (2019) indicated that there is a need for more collaboration between higher education and secondary education. Stern (2019) suggested, in order to prepare students for college readiness, conversations between secondary education and higher education institutions are needed. Paul Weeks, ACT Vice-president for Career and College Readiness, suggested that "increased collaboration between secondary and postsecondary institutions can have increasingly positive results in the performance of high school graduates at the collegiate level."

Hawkins et al. (2019) reported little research on the developmental period between adolescence and adulthood, especially in terms of success in school. Peper and Dahl (2019) discussed the significance of understanding puberty and maturation on cognitive engagement and motivation, while Shin and Stega (2019) reported the importance of understanding the adolescent's need for having purpose and meaning in learning.

According to Wu (2019), "Earning a postsecondary education is well recognized and has implications for economic growth, quality, and social mobility, and can ultimately lead to better wages and lifetime earnings, which lowers unemployment and poverty." Students who have college degrees have more opportunities for improved jobs and careers, as well as considerably

higher incomes than those without college degrees (Alarcon & Edwards, 2019; Morisano et al., 2020). Considering the above examined studies, the present study seeks to investigate the significance of higher education from an individual and social point of view. Therefore, while the above literature is confirming a huge gap between high school and college graduates in terms of income, this study was intended to show the significance of having a framework of college oriented and prepared mind among high school students before joining college, to minimize the current dropout gap along with the income gap

Jackson and Kurlaender (2019) revealed that effective preparation for college readiness is done through programs and seminars provided by high schools. Jackson, and Kurlaender (2019) discussed that even though researchers were aware for many decades about the problem of persistence, an effective intervention in the postsecondary setting is still to come. Jackson and Kurlaender suggested that requiring high school students to undergo difficult classes may enhance college perseverance. Venezia and Jaeger (2019) considered rigorous courses and teachers' expectations in high schools can have a positive impact on self-regulated learning in college. Some secondary schools have implemented college-level courses with college credit. As stated by Dweck et al. (2020) and Edmunds et al. (2020), if administered correctly, such courses can appropriately help a high school student understand what is expected in college.

Belasco (2019) reported that high school guidance counselors are the primary source for information related to college entrance and that their input is usually positive and significant to the college-going process. However, the local high school guidance department noted that information given to students was usually limited to statistics, housing facts, and other similar data that were reported in college brochures and on college websites. Additionally, the guidance counselors reported that even when students experienced colleges through tours and information sessions, little was learned about the day-to-day process of leaving home and living away.

In the literature concerning cognitive approaches considered in colleges, Conley (2019) discovered that the following key cognitive strategies are integrated in new student-level courses: problem design, examination, analysis, communication, as well as accuracy and precision. The four dimensions of college readiness are (a) key cognitive strategies, (b) content knowledge, (c) academic behaviors, and (d) college knowledge (Conley, 2019). Some college readiness' dimensions proposed by Conley (2019) offer a baseline comprehension of the necessity for high school learners to embrace success towards the subsequent level of education. Conley's concept goes beyond academic preparation and identifies other important aspects that are at times ignored, such as behaviors, parental support, fiscal support, and general college knowledge. Highlighting these aspects contributed to the overall academic success of students (Venezia & Jaeger, 2019). Having thoroughly examined the above literature, my intent was to utilize the recommendations related to how students can more effectively be prepared to obtain their goals after the completion of their secondary education.

The concept of college preparedness indicates the ability of Senior High School (SHS) graduates to be admitted to college and succeed without remediation in foundation courses. According to Conley (2019), college preparedness includes (1) knowledge of content, (2) application of content, and (3) cognitive strategies. These elements are interdependent and it is for students to hurdle these challenges of college life. Notably, college preparedness in the Philippines is a relatively recent concept brought on by the introduction of the K-12 program. Since higher education is one of the program's curricular exits, instructors, teachers, policymakers, and other stakeholders are involved in appraising SHS graduates' preparation in seeking tertiary education. In the same vein, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) developed the College Readiness Standards (CRS) in 2011, specifying the skills required of graduates from the K-12 program in the General Education Courses (GEC) in order to ensure continuity of the skills acquired from the K-12 curriculum. CRS development aims to reduce remediation among higher education institutions (HEIs) and assess compliance with international quality standards (Commission on Higher Education, 2011). The CRS has seven fields of study: English, Literature, Filipino, Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Humanities. It consists of content and performance standards. Content standards refer to what students need to know, while performance standards pertain to what they can demonstrate with what they know.

The ecological theory of college readiness. Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of college readiness is a widely utilized college readiness model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2019). Ecological CR theory considers the role of student individual characteristics and personal agency; the characteristics of multiple, interacting levels of context; the effects of chronological and historical time, and the processes through which all these elements bring about change in students (Arnold, Lu & Armstrong, 2019). A real CR occurs through a reciprocal relationship between the student and the context. For example, the culture and values of the society have an indirect effect on the students. These cultural values can be filtered down to the student classroom learning through the curriculum. Being in the heart of the environment, the individual student interacts with the proximal contexts (microsystems) that play their direct interactions with the student, and the effectiveness of student readiness is realized through what Arnold, Lu, and Armstrong (2019) call the proximal processes that happen as a result of these interactions. The school, teachers, parents, counselors, peers, and others that make direct interaction with students are the microsystems.

The combined model (Sá & Tavares, 2022) roots the student choice in economic and social factors. The economic view assumes that the assumption of accurate information depends on the estimation that students perform a rational analysis of the costs and benefits to maximize the benefit of attending a college or a field of study. Under economic theory, students give attention to the labor market of the academic area they choose. On the other hand, the students tend to make a comparative analysis of the costs of attending an institution or training against the returns they get after graduation. According to sociological theory, the social status that is achieved through getting specialized in an academic area is a factor that pushes students to choose a certain field of study. The gender and personality of students also determine student choices.

Self-determination theory states that the school's social and environmental factors affect the degree to which students' basic needs are satisfied in the setting. Also, how the student adapts to or responds to these affecting factors determines the well-being, performance, commitment, and persistence of the student in transition to college. The extent to which the schools and the environments fulfill or fit his/her needs affects the transition to HE (Davidson et al, 2019).

Defining the term "meritocracy" as a social system in which an individual's talent and effort, rather than ascriptive traits, determine individuals' placements in a social hierarchy, Carter et.al (2019) viewed HS to HE transition as a merit-based objective phenomenon that should be based on the objective assessment of individuals' natural talents and efforts. The mandate of the admission system is maintaining and cultivating the meritocratic principle in education that is the basis for performance-based college admission and developing college-going culture.

Fong and Kremer (2020) viewed the successful transition to HE through the lens of expectancy-value motivational theory stating that personal motivation shares a significant variance in academic success. Another theory that underlies student transition to HE (i.e., student effort and attainment) is the educational expectation that is rooted in the sociological, economic, and psychological factors. According to this model, students' family and social backgrounds and academic intelligence impact their educational achievement. These motivational and career theories relate successful college-going with long-term incentives, such as jobs and other privileges that can be earned after graduation. The cumulative of these factors shape students' educational and career expectations, this also impacts their educational and occupational achievement (Domina, Conley & Farkas, 2019).

II. Methodology

I used a qualitative approach. The objective of qualitative research is to understand how people interpret experiences. This type of research focuses on the reasons behind experiences, using questions to gain a better understanding of these experiences (Merriam, 2019). As such, I conducted this study to explore the problem of students who graduate from secondary schools not being prepared to be successful in college, investigating the academic and social preparation of students prior to their admission into college.

This study was intended to provide a better understanding on the preparation of students for college after secondary education. While studies incorporate several methods of collecting data, the most appropriate methodology for the present study of first-year college students' perceptions regarding their college readiness after graduating from a high school was qualitative. There are several options in collecting data in a qualitative approach to research (Creswell, 2019; Merriam, 2019). Qualitative approaches are used to focus on paradigms, theoretical overviews, identity, and moral agency (Creswell et al., 2019). Students under investigation have completed their secondary education and have entered college. Researchers use collected data to help guide

the development of a plan. These data may help K-12 school leadership develop a program to address this concern.

To collect sufficient data to address the approached problem, I sought two major categories of participants: (a) high school graduates currently enrolled as first-year in college and (b) teachers who teach a senior high school course. The sample size for senior high school learners who are currently enrolled as first year students in college, who are at least 18 years of age and graduated from a school, would be 10 participants, and the sample size of teachers who teach senior high school courses would be 10 participants.

The standardized open-ended interview is extremely structured in terms of the wording of the questions. Participants are always asked identical questions, but the questions are worded so that responses are open-ended (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2019). This open-endedness allows the participants to contribute as much detailed information as they desire and it also allows the researcher to ask probing questions as a means of follow-up.

The final phase in the interview design process is that of interpreting the data that was gathered during the interview process. During this phase, the researcher must make “sense” out of what was just uncovered and compile the data into sections or groups of information, also known as themes or codes (Creswell, 2012, 2019). These themes or codes are consistent phrases, expressions, or ideas that were common among research participants (Kvale, 2019). How the researcher formulates themes or codes vary. Many researchers suggest the need to employ a third party consultant who can review codes or themes in order to determine the quality and effectiveness based on their evaluation of the interview transcripts (Creswell, 2019). This helps alleviate researcher biases or potentially eliminate where over-analyzing of data has occurred. Many researchers may choose to employ an iterative review process where a committee of nonparticipating researchers can provide constructive feedback and suggestions to the researcher(s) primarily involved with the study.

Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing [qualitative data](#). It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as [interview transcripts](#). The researcher closely examines the data to identify common themes – topics, ideas and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly.

There are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis, but the most common form follows a six-step process: [Familiarization](#), [Coding](#), [Generating themes](#), [Reviewing themes](#), [Defining and naming themes](#), and [Writing up](#).

This process was originally developed for psychology research by [Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke](#). However, thematic analysis is a flexible method that can be adapted to many different kinds of research.

The six steps prescribed by Braun and Clarke (2019) to carry out a thematic analysis are guidelines and should not be used as prescriptive, linear, and inflexible rules when analyzing data. They should rather be used in relation to the research question and the available data.

III. Results and Discussion

Experiences of senior high school graduates who have studied from a secondary school regarding preparation for college, both academically and socially

These are the perceptions of students who graduated from a school regarding preparation for college, both academically and socially. Out of the overall population of students who participated in this study, only a few of them indicated that they were very prepared for college after graduating from a secondary school. The perceptions were analyzed and from the analysis, themes were coded and interpreted: *student social connection, critical thinking and problem solving, and basic literacy skills.*

Students wish they had learned during their high school experience to better prepare them for college education, both academically and socially

What do high school graduates wish they had learned during their high school experience to better prepare them for their college education, both academically and socially? When asked what content would have been helpful prior to entering college a major concern found in the data was real world experience, students indicated that they wish for professional learning, and for coaching, for learning walks. other wishes: *students wished for professional learning, students wished for coaching, and students wished for learning walks.*

Perceptions of senior high school teachers regarding students' preparation, both academically and socially

What are the perceptions of teachers in regard to students' college preparation, both academically and socially? Ten (10) teachers answered the question and here are their responses: *underprepared for college, struggles with Reading and Writing, Struggle with Time Management, Critical Thinking, Less cultural diversity resulting in less interpersonal skills, Better Life Skills, and Strong Personal skills.*

Discussion

According to the results of the study, the different indications or basis for the students in order to be prepared in college are: a. Monthly income of the family; Fields of interest of the students; Chosen course for college of the student; and Attitude, behavior, grades and performance of the student inside the class.

The role and function of Senior High School program are provides guidance and direction to the student's chosen course for college in order for them to be decided; develops that student's inner skills, talents and abilities based on his/ her fields of interest that can be used in college/ tertiary level of education; prepares Senior High School students to international workplace and shape them into a professional or worker that is skilled, equipped and competitive; equips students with the appropriate programs and actual trainings in order for them to be prepared for their workplace environment, it maybe within the borders of our country or abroad; helps students adopt and acquire the global standard or quality of education.

The different benefits that students receive from the Senior High School program in aspects for College preparation are the following: students receive a global quality of education that includes the method and approach of learning adopted from other countries that can be applied in the global workplace. It also includes the upgraded and higher level of topics and lessons that can enrich the knowledge of students; students receive On the Job/ Actual training that can help them apply what they learned. This can also enable them to develop or improve their skills and talent that are one of the important requirements when they apply for a job; students receive broad and diverse subjects or programs that are extracted from college- level courses. This can provide them insights and serves as an introductory phase so that they will be prepared for college; and students receive the essential tools for college preparation such as subjects, assessments, trainings, workshops and programs.

The effects of the Senior High School program to students can either be positive or negative. But, according to the results of the research study, almost all of the Senior High School students consider the positive effects of the program due to its benefits, impact, roles and function that can fulfill their goals and dreams in life.

The Senior High School program is considered as the pre- college level and a stage that prepares students before entering Tertiary Level of Education. These are the additional years in Secondary Education that equip, shape and develop the inner skills, talent or abilities of the students can be used not just on college but also on their future workplace either in local or abroad.

That's why the program must be strengthened, enriched, and enhanced by the government because it will serve as an important foundation for the students' preparation for the future. Government officials and implementers of the program must answer the needs of the students such as enough number of school buildings and facilities, learning tools and equipment, instructional materials and enough number of teaching personnel and instructors that are mostly needed. The government must focus and strictly monitor the Senior High School program because it serves as the bridge to a better future for many Filipino youth.

Teachers are the most important individuals for the implementation of this program. They must be equipped and well- trained to ensure the effectiveness of student's learning. They serve as one of the significant foundations for the student's learning and development. They are the ones

that will enrich student's knowledge, skills and abilities that students will use in the future. SHS teachers must provide strict observation or guidance, college level approach and higher quality of teaching.

Senior High School students serve as the main subject of this program and in order to make it effective, they must conduct measures for the preparation of students before entering college. They must adopt and acquire all the subjects, programs, training and assessments being offered by the Senior High School program, and then apply it to the college level together with their future profession.

As one of the most important foundations of a student's future. Parents, guardians and family relatives must provide adequate guidance and support for the students upon fulfilling their dreams in life. They must sustain and give solutions to the different needs of the student in educational and financial aspects to ensure that they will have no problem in regards to learning.

College institutions or tertiary education providers must provide an environment for students that are safe and comfortable for them. They must ensure the student's learning and development based on their chosen course through providing high quality of education, world-based training and assessments together with programs that can enrich student's skills and talent. College institutions must be the center of education that is well- equipped, sustained and stable to handle the future of the students.

To the future researchers, this study can serve as an inspiration and motivation for them to develop a wider/ broader version of this research as a continuation that can benefit not just students, but also teachers, family relatives and individuals that are under the Senior High School program.

IV. Conclusion

Three (3) students indicated that the social pressures of living alone or being in college was a challenge while transitioning into college. While looking at the data, it is clear that a trend can be seen that the student's perception is that math was a challenge for them. Two (2) of the students indicated organization was a challenge and one stated that they were socially unprepared.

As students transition from secondary schools they are coming from very different settings. Students in particular do not have the same level of access to social interactions that their peers tend to have. Students from other areas have an easier time interacting outside of the school building as geographically those areas lend themselves to less barriers.

The students indicated that one of the most important factors that helped to prepare them for college was higher level learning opportunities that they took in secondary school. The students stated that the rigor of the college courses opened their eyes to what they would be expected to do in college.

With regards to students, most of them indicated that they did not have as much access or exposure to higher level courses than some of their peers did in secondary school. This is often the case in secondary schools as access to these courses can be challenging due to budgetary constraints.

Stahl (2019) explained that professional learning communities promote change and are widely used because they often do not require additional resources, can be conducted within the school day and allow for small groups of students to work together. Ohlson and Donis-Keller (2019) reported that students enjoyed engaging in discourse with their peers about their school data.

Ernest and Strichik (2019) explained that coaches should serve as support for the teachers and administrators. Through coaching cycles, the students build their capacity by using their own assets to enhance existing abilities and develop new skills (Czajka & McConnell, 2019; Ernest & Strichik, 2019). Coaching provides a level of support and mentoring for participants (Kraft et al., 2019). Using coaching when implementing new practices, can make the process more manageable.

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She is currently a Teacher II and a dedicated educator at Pedro A. Arches National High School (PAANHS), where she teaches science to high school students. She has accumulated five years of experience serving in the Department of Education. She believes that education is fundamental to individual development enabling people to reach their full potential, broaden their perspective and contribute meaningfully to the world around them.