
ACING THE LICENSURE EXAMINATION FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHERS: NARRATIVES FROM THE REPEATERS

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ABSTRACT

Passing the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers is a critical milestone in the teaching profession. However, some educators, referred to as repeaters, face the challenge of passing the examination after multiple attempts. This study explores the experiences of Social Studies educators who graduated from a state university in Bataan, Philippines, and eventually passed the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers after initially failing. The research addresses two key questions: (1) What are the realizations of repeaters in failing the licensure examination? and (2) What are the realizations of repeaters from passing the licensure examination after a previous failure? This narrative inquiry study engaged eight (8) participants selected through purposive sampling. The findings reveal that participants transformed their setbacks into valuable learning experiences and adopted comprehensive strategies to enhance their readiness for the examination. The study also emphasizes the significance of self-motivation, resilience, and personal accountability as critical factors in achieving success. The narratives of the repeaters highlight essential indicators for passing the licensure examination and provide valuable insights into the challenges faced by repeaters. Additionally, the study emphasizes the importance of adopting diverse and appropriate preparation strategies for all examinees aiming to excel in the teaching licensure examination.

1. Introduction

One of the essential indicators of relevant and competitive education in the Philippines is having competent educators who can teach the lessons effectively and possess the minimum qualification to teach in the registered educational institution in the country, which is the professional teaching license. Abdallah and Musah (2021) pointed out that achieving a professional license through a teaching licensure examination is the most significant professional development that aspirant teachers must pass since it will be considered an example of successful educational achievement. Licensure examination or teacher certification programs as a form of occupational growth verify that the examinee possesses relevant and appropriate competencies of the professional educator, such as mastery of the content and

principles of classroom management. Passing the examination assures the community that all newly licensed educators have efficiently acquired the essential tools to perform effectively in the classroom. Thus, the benefit of passing the licensure examination is limited to the passer and the community since it ensures that the public receives the quality education possible. Education graduates are not eligible to teach in public educational institutions without a professional license.

According to Bongalosa et al. (2020), the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers (LEPT) in the Philippines is a reliable high-stakes assessment structure that can measure prospective teachers' total mastery and efficiency in the profession and gives access to sustainable professional development. Passing the licensure examination is one of the critical obstacles that an experienced teacher aspirant must overcome to achieve teaching eligibility since various institutions have limited capabilities to determine the professional competence of newly licensed teachers (Chung & Zou, 2023). Passing the assessment is crucial to educators because failing the LEPT will require the prospective teacher to retake the examination until achieving success; those still attempting to pass the examination are called repeaters.

For instance, a state university in Bataan, Philippines, has shown inconsistent performance in the LEPT over three testing dates. The LEPT examinations held in October 2022, March 2023, and September 2023 tallied remarkable passing rates of 83.48%, 89.84%, and 79.31% for the first-timers, respectively. In contrast, repeaters had concerning passing rates: 51.06% in October 2022, 15.15% in March 2023, and 36.67% in September 2023. The disparities in performance influenced the institutional passing rates, which were 74.07% in October 2022, 74.53% in March 2023, and 57.63% in September 2023 (Professional Regulations Commission, 2022, 2023a, 2023b). It can be observed that the discrepancies in the institutional passing rates over the testing dates were primarily due to the decreasing passing rate of repeaters. However, it is noteworthy that some repeaters could pass the LEPT, highlighting individual successes amidst the challenges faced in the examination.

Therefore, it is critical to explore the experiences of repeaters who have successfully passed the licensure examination, particularly those specializing in Social Studies, given that there is a shortage of professional teachers in this subject (Pacaña et al., 2019). This study can also provide valuable insights to support repeaters in their efforts to pass the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers, which ultimately contributes to enhancing the overall passing rates of Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs).

2. Theoretical basis

Rotter's (1966) Locus of Control Theory (LoC) argues that many decisions and outcomes characterize personal lives, and one possesses agency in shaping destiny. The control is divided into two, namely: (1) Internal Locus of Control, which encompasses the belief that personal actions and decisions exert influence over the achieved outcomes, and (2) External Locus of Control, which asserts that individuals attribute outcomes to external factors such as fate or the actions of others. Individuals with an external LoC view themselves as not personally accountable for the outcomes they encounter. On the other hand, those with an internal LoC possess a greater sense of self-authority and hold themselves responsible for the consequences of their actions. However, personal reflection and positive attributes such as self-confidence, perseverance, and dedication must be possessed by individuals to maximize LoC because a lack of the necessary attributes can lead to internal challenges such as anxiety, pressure, and stress (Nowicki et al., 2021).

This study utilized the Locus of Control Theory to examine how Social Studies educators who initially failed the Licensure Examination for Professional Teachers transformed their experiences into meaningful outcomes. The research focused on two key questions: (1) What are the realizations of repeaters in failing the licensure examination? And (2) What are the realizations of repeaters from passing the licensure examination after a previous failure? The questions highlight the critical role of strategic reflection, exploring how the realizations of educators both in failing and passing the examination with integration in the concepts of external and internal Locus of Control.

3. Methodology

This study used a qualitative narrative inquiry design. According to Parks (2023), narrative inquiry is a newly emerged qualitative design whose primary purpose is for participants to provide the researcher with personal life experiences through stories. The approach is particularly suited for exploring how the Social Studies repeaters hurdle the LEPT as it allows for an in-depth understanding of the personal and contextual factors that influenced their success. The study uncovered the unique strategies and motivations that contributed to eventual success by capturing the participants' narratives. The design facilitated a detailed exploration of the participants' experiences, which provided insights into the complex process of overcoming initial failure and obtaining the elusive professional teaching license.

Moreover, purposive sampling was utilized to carefully select participants who could provide meaningful narratives in the study. The sampling method was particularly appropriate since the focus of the study was exploring specific experiences and realizations related to failure and success in the examination process. The application of purposive sampling allowed the researcher to identify eight (8) participants who met specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, which ensured that the selected individuals had firsthand experience with the phenomenon under investigation.

The data gathering process for this study was conducted through several structured steps to ensure the richness of data extracted from the participants. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were arranged at times convenient for the participants when the informed consents were secured. The interviews focused on eliciting personal narratives about their experiences with the licensure examination, specifically their realizations and strategies for failing and eventually passing the examination. The semi-structured format allowed participants to share their stories in an open-ended manner while addressing the key research questions. All interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy, and the recordings were later transcribed verbatim.

Furthermore, Braun and Clarke's Thematic Analysis (2014) was employed to identify common themes and patterns in the narratives through data familiarization, coding, generating initial themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and writing up. Lastly, multiple qualitative data collection techniques, such as interviews, focus group discussions, and participant observation, were utilized to ensure data triangulation, enhancing the findings' robustness and validity.

Lastly, ethical considerations were paramount in the study to ensure all participants' protection, privacy, and well-being. Informed consent was obtained from each participant to ensure they were fully aware of the research and their rights. Confidentiality was rigorously maintained, and all data were anonymized. Any identifying personal information was removed to protect the identities of the participants. Additionally, the study adhered to voluntary participation principles to ensure all individuals were willing to participate in the investigation.

4. Result and discussion

The following themes are drawn based on the narratives of the Social Studies repeaters: (1) learning from failure, (2) holistic preparation, and (3) self as the primary key in passing the licensure examination.

4.1. Learning from failure

Participants described their initial failure as a significant learning experience that fundamentally altered their exam preparation and professional development approach. The repeaters adopted structured and disciplined study routines to enhance their understanding of complex subjects. They emphasized the importance of resilience and perseverance, viewing failure not as a defeat but a valuable opportunity for growth and improvement. As Participant III stated:

“The first thing I did was think about the problems and why I failed on the first take. After realizing this, I sought ways to avoid them on my second attempt. I left my office job and tried to find work related to teaching. I was accepted at a private school, and because I was already in an academic setting, I gained a deeper understanding of what I reviewed in professional education and my major. I could apply it directly to my work, so it was like I was reviewing while working”.

Participant III perceived his clerical work as a hindrance to his examination preparation, as it caused physical exhaustion and consumed most of his time. As a result, he deliberately chose to seek employment aligned with the teaching profession. This strategic career shift proved highly advantageous, as it alleviated the constraints imposed by his previous job and served as a valuable means of preparing for the upcoming licensure examination by exposing him to actual teaching. Meaningful learning experiences are instrumental in achieving higher aspirations and building confidence (Dahlin et al., 2018). This exposure allowed him to develop a deeper understanding of the practical aspects of education, which facilitated his preparation for the LEPT, particularly in the Professional Education component. Similarly, Participant II narrates:

“When I found out about the result, I felt sad. However, I realized that the defeat I experienced could still be changed because I could retake the exam. So, after discovering that I failed, I planned to pass the LEPT. I resigned from my job and applied to a school that needed a Social Studies teacher because I believe it’s possible to work while reviewing. Teaching would be a better job because it’s like reviewing while teaching, which is covered in the LEPT”.

Participant II decided to explore opportunities in the field of education due to the physical demands of working in a fast-food chain. She believed that pursuing a teaching-related position would offer practical benefits during her licensure examination preparation. Relevant work experiences can foster self-reflection, leading to meaningful learning (Casinillo et al., 2022). She felt that by engaging in teaching while reviewing for the licensure examination, she could gain familiarity with real teaching situations while also earning money to cover her LEPT-related expenses. However, she could not secure a position in an educational institution and instead focused on her review, which she had neglected during her initial attempt at the exam. Meanwhile, Participant IV emphasized that:

“I’ve identified where I fell short, so now I know how to prepare for the next time. Also, my score was just 1 point short of passing, so it’s highly likely that I’ll pass on my next attempt”.

Participant IV gained profound insights from her initial failure in the LEPT, which was pivotal in cultivating her motivation and determination to succeed on her second attempt. This experience empowered her to adopt a proactive approach to her preparations, prioritizing a comprehensive review, ensuring quality rest, and booking accommodation well in advance. Redefining the essence of success is integral to recovering individuals who have experienced failure (Law & Finnigan, 2021). Participant IV allowed herself to appreciate the learning opportunities embedded within failures, viewing setbacks as stepping stones toward achieving her professional teaching license. In addition, Participant VI stated that:

“I tried (to pass the LEPT), and it wasn’t my last attempt yet. I became more determined to take a second try because of what happened”.

Following his unsuccessful attempt at the LEPT, Participant VI experienced a significant shift in his priorities. Despite being the breadwinner of his family, he chose to reduce his overtime hours as a cook in a fast-food restaurant to prioritize his preparation for the test. Although he genuinely desired to enroll in a review center, he opted for self-review instead. This decision was driven by his strong determination to improve his chances of passing the LEPT while continuing to provide financial support to his family. Additionally, Participant VII stated that:

“I also used what happened to me during my first attempt as a guide. I remembered what went wrong and why I didn’t pass, mainly because of test anxiety, and then I thought about how to avoid those mistakes. For me, it’s important to prioritize identifying a person’s shortcomings so they can find solutions for them”.

For Participant VII, her inability to pass the LEPT on her first attempt was a significant challenge. Still, she believed this setback could be effectively addressed by understanding the experiences contributing to the outcome. Corbi et al. (2020) argue that prior learning experience is crucial to success. By applying relevant strategies, she could avoid social pressure and minimize the test anxiety she had previously encountered, which was essential for her to concentrate fully on preparing for the examination. Moreover, participant I responded that:

“I just looked at the positive side, and even though I failed, there’s still the next LEPT. So, I prepared for it because I didn’t pass on the first attempt; maybe that wasn’t my time. Perhaps on my next take, I’ll pass”.

The struggles that led to the initial failure of Participant I did not deter her from continuing her goal to pass the licensure examination, and learning from her previous experiences instilled in her the optimism to retake the test and the understanding of the importance of thorough preparation to achieve her aim. Icekson et al. (2020) suggest that optimism and diligence can contribute significantly to success. Despite experiencing fatigue during her preparation, she demonstrated resilience and maintained a positive outlook, drawing strength from her ability to apply the valuable lessons learned from past experiences.

The Social Studies repeaters showed a remarkable ability to transform the challenges they encountered during their first attempt at the LEPT into valuable learning experiences for their second attempt. This transformation was evident in their heightened motivation and

increased effort in preparation, driven by the understanding that completing the LEPT would open up more professional opportunities for them.

4.2. Holistic preparation

Another theme that emerged from the experiences of the Social Studies repeaters is the importance of adopting a holistic approach to preparing for the LEPT. Initially, the participants relied on limited and conventional methods, such as reading review materials, which left them inadequately prepared to answer the comprehensive questions of the actual exam. As a result, they were caught off-guard and faced various challenges during the test-taking process. Van Cleef (2022) argues that the state should review and reform licensure examinations, as correctly answering comprehensive questions does not necessarily ensure that examinees acquire the relevant professional skills. Nevertheless, the Social Studies repeaters demonstrated adaptability in response to the policies set forth by the PRC. They adopted a more comprehensive approach to preparation, covering various aspects to increase their chances of success in the assessment after their initial failure. Participant II stated that:

“Preparing for the LEPT isn’t just about going through the motions. You must be physically, mentally, and spiritually ready because neglecting these aspects can significantly impact your LEPT performance. If you’re not emotionally prepared—for example, if there are family problems occupying your thoughts, it can hinder your focus on passing the LEPT. Physically, if you’re unwell, you may not be able to perform your best in answering the LEPT questions. Mentally, lack of readiness can lead to lack of concentration and distract you from the exam, potentially causing you to fail”.

She emphasized that holistic readiness is crucial for passing the LEPT, highlighting the interconnectedness of various individual aspects. For instance, after reviewing learning materials, examinees must get quality rest to refresh their minds and facilitate effective knowledge acquisition in the following study session. Individuals who can maximize their cognitive capabilities, such as critical thinking, tend to perform efficiently in examinations (Abduqodirovich, 2023). However, the rest must also be considered, as it significantly impacts cognitive performance (Fakhari et al., 2016). Additionally, the emotional aspect is vital because emotional instability can lead to a lack of concentration, creating a barrier to learning. Negative emotions, such as stress, can adversely affect learning concentration and retention (Vogel & Schwabe, 2016). Furthermore, board examination preparation that nurtures self-awareness promotes mental toughness, and encourages good study habits are essential components for a prospective professional aiming to pass the assessment (Bibon, 2022). Participant, I echoed this sentiment, stating that:

“It needs to be holistic, where you’re prepared physically, mentally, and emotionally. You can’t neglect mental health or physical well-being. At the same time, having social and financial support is important. Having review materials is also not enough; you must be ready”.

Participant, I highlighted the importance of holistic preparation as a crucial factor influencing the outcome of the LEPT. She identified her lack of commitment and ineffective time management during her review as reasons for her initial failure. Abass and Shalaby (2021) emphasize that time management skills are essential for skill enhancement. Additionally, she acknowledged that her demanding job commitments significantly hindered her preparation, leading her to decide to leave her job. This decision, however, resulted in

financial constraints affecting her ability to file and enroll in a review center. Financial limitations are a common challenge for many taking the licensure examination (Mensah et al., 2020). Nonetheless, her family's social and economic support was a crucial motivation source, helping her focus on obtaining a professional teaching license. Caranguian (2022) notes that unwavering family support is vital in assisting prospective educators to succeed in the LEPT. This support empowered her to stay steadfast and resolute in pursuing her professional aspirations. Meanwhile, Participant III stated that:

“You should not only be physically prepared but also mentally, financially, and spiritually ready because even the waiting period for the LEPT can be challenging if you’re not mentally prepared. Your preparation should be comprehensive because when everything is in place, you’ll feel more confident and capable of answering and passing the LEPT”.

Participant III’s mental and spiritual aspects are crucial for passing the LEPT. Maintaining optimism and managing stress are key components of mental preparedness (Yang et al., 2022). His experience shows that recognizing and addressing mental challenges, such as the test anxiety he faced during his first attempt, can significantly enhance performance outcomes. Furthermore, spiritual practices emerged as integral to his pursuit of LEPT success (Ocampo & Aragon, 2018). Participant III’s spirituality gave him inner strength, resilience, and motivation. Engaging in spiritual practices such as meditation, prayer, or introspection offered him clarity, significantly impacting his ability to confront challenges and persevere through the difficulties of passing the test. Additionally, Participant VI narrates that:

“The LEPT isn’t just about reviewing; you must mentally prepare yourself. You should have self-motivation to keep going with your review and find ways to understand the study materials. Getting proper rest to maintain consistency and avoid getting sick is also important because neglecting yourself can hinder effective review”.

Participant VI emphasized the critical role of self-motivation in passing the LEPT despite facing financial constraints and family obligations. Motivation drives the perseverance of aspiring professional educators to acquire the essential knowledge and skills needed for the licensure examination (Bibon, 2022). Faced with these challenges, he chose self-review, leveraging his resourcefulness to ensure a quality review experience. Additionally, he took proactive steps to maximize his review period by reducing his working hours. Kidron and Lindsay (2014) suggest increasing learning time can enhance academic achievement. This strategic decision enabled him to focus better on his review and provided crucial time for rest, which is essential for maintaining overall well-being. Meanwhile, Participant IV said that:

“To pass the LEPT, you need to be ready yourself. Even if you’ve reviewed well, being emotionally unstable or staying up late during the exam, like what happened to me, can cause you to fail. It’s essential to review and rest, eat healthy foods, pray, and avoid negative thoughts”.

Participant IV emphasized maintaining a healthy diet and avoiding overthinking in preparing for the LEPT. A balanced diet is essential for sustaining cognitive performance during extended review periods (Khan et al., 2022). Conversely, individuals who have faced failure are often susceptible to overthinking (Situmorang & Widodo, 2024). Participant IV highlighted the need to avoid overthinking, as the stress and anxiety associated with the LEPT can lead to self-doubt. By maintaining a clear mindset, prospective educators can minimize distractions and enhance their preparation and performance. Moreover, Participant VII said that:

“In the LEPT, reviewing should be taken seriously to maintain focus. When you get distracted, you lose what you’ve learned because the LEPT is about how much you know and can analyze. You must read extensively, but remember to care for yourself and rest. It’s not enough to be mentally prepared; your body must be ready, too. You can’t review for just a week; if you plan to take the exam, you must prepare well”.

Participant VII emphasized the importance of cognitive preparation for the LEPT, given its comprehensive nature, which spans from general knowledge to educational principles. She elaborated on the need for rigorous mental readiness and intellectual acuity, highlighting the enhancement of intellectual capabilities, critical thinking skills, and knowledge acquisition to address the broad range of questions on the LEPT effectively. At the same time, she acknowledged the necessity of physical rest following exhaustive review sessions. Adequate rest and sleep are crucial for improving concentration, memory consolidation, and overall mental acuity, all essential for retaining and applying knowledge during academic activities (Rose & Ramanan, 2017). By incorporating rest into her preparation routine, Participant VII demonstrated a thoughtful approach to maintaining a balanced and sustainable learning process. This holistic preparation helped mitigate the risk of burnout, stress, and mental blocks, reducing the likelihood of needing to retake the examination.

It can be deduced that the Social Studies repeaters adopted a holistic approach in their preparation, addressing cognitive skills and aligning and conditioning their physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and financial aspects to achieve their goal. This comprehensive approach marked a significant shift from their initial preparation efforts, where such essential components were overlooked.

4.3. Self as the primary key to passing the licensure examination

Experiencing failure on the first attempt at the board examination can be profoundly frustrating and demotivating, especially given the dedication and effort invested in completing a bachelor’s degree to qualify for the assessment. Despite thorough preparations aimed at securing professional eligibility and accessing career opportunities, various challenges, such as social pressure, financial constraints, and family obligations, contributed to their initial failure. Nevertheless, the Social Studies repeaters rebuilt their confidence and resolve to retake the examination. This decision was fueled by the realization that success ultimately depended on their efforts. They recognized that self-improvement, rigorous preparation, and a positive mindset were crucial for achieving a successful outcome in their subsequent attempt. Acknowledging personal responsibility in their preparation process motivated them to tackle the LEPT again. As Participant VIII noted:

“Even if I’m physically tired, my mental health feels lighter because I’m reviewing and aware of the effort I’m putting in. That’s why I believe I can perform better after taking the LET. Last time, I was just a few points short of passing because my review wasn’t thorough enough. Now (on my second take), I’m focused and no longer tired from work, so I’m confident I can make it”.

Participant VIII encountered significant exam stress and mental blocks during her first attempt at the licensure examination. These challenges were exacerbated by social pressures and competing responsibilities, which left her with insufficient time for thorough preparation. Through self-reflection, she acknowledged the severity of these obstacles and sought targeted interventions to address them. This process enabled her to approach her second attempt with

increased confidence. Mostafa and Lim (2020) emphasizes the importance of motivational scaffolds in learning from mistakes and achieving psychological resilience, while Dahlin et al. (2018) highlight the role of personal attitudes in overcoming failure. The renewed self-confidence of Participant VIII stemmed from the realization that prioritizing and allocating sufficient time for preparation was essential, which was a step she had overlooked in her initial attempt. Similarly, Participant VII noted that:

“Don’t lose hope. When taking the exam, consider it your last attempt because you’re bound to pass. The only real opponent is yourself, and being open to improvement is crucial. Consider past experiences to understand why you didn’t pass before and avoid those pitfalls in the next attempt, staying focused on your review”.

Participant VII found that accepting failure and remaining open to improvement were crucial for summoning the courage to retake and ultimately pass the licensure examination. This acceptance was a significant learning experience, illuminating areas needing enhancement and motivating her to seek better preparation strategies. According to Mauliya et al. (2020), motivated individuals proactively seek ways to achieve success. Furthermore, her willingness to embrace change and engage in self-assessment was instrumental in her decision to retake the LEPT. Hotifah et al. (2020) assert that an eagerness to embrace change fosters a willingness to learn and adapt, evident in Participant VII’s renewed determination to succeed. Similarly, Participant III noted that:

“You need to maintain focus because your effort in reviewing will be in vain without it. The LET isn’t something you can pass with just a day of review; it requires determination to succeed. Prepare yourself and realize that obtaining a license is the reward amid the struggles of preparation. Patience and perseverance are essential”.

Participant III’s initial lack of concentration during his first attempt at the LEPT led to a critical realization of the importance of focused preparation. He attributed his mental block and pressure during the examination to inadequate preparation, which was influenced by his decision to prioritize his job immediately after graduation. Shankar and Park (2016) note that stress and exhaustion often lead to a lack of concentration during learning activities such as assessments. This experience prompted Participant III to reassess his priorities and recognize the necessity of dedicating himself entirely to his professional preparation. This self-awareness enabled him to adopt a more strategic approach for his second attempt. Briones (2021) supports this, highlighting that self-determination is a key non-academic factor influencing board examination performance. Similarly, Participant V expressed a related perspective:

“I conditioned my mind to believe that I would pass on my second attempt to motivate myself to excel in preparation. Since I’m the only one helping myself, and only a few know I’m retaking, I put in the effort”.

The experience of Participant V illustrates a significant shift towards self-reliance in her approach to passing the licensure examination. Recognizing the importance of personal accountability, she opted not to enroll in a review center for her second attempt, believing that her efforts and dedication were crucial to achieving a positive outcome. This decision underscored her commitment to independently applying her acquired knowledge and skills. Paso et al. (2017) suggest that self-reliance is crucial for success when individuals use their skills at the highest level before seeking external assistance. Participant V’s newfound perspective reflects a deeper self-awareness, as she understood the impact of external factors

on her test anxiety and proactively sought to address and overcome her previous challenges. Shannon et al. (2021) affirm that such realizations occur when individuals become aware of the problematic situations that need addressing. Similarly, Participant II shared that:

“I became more focused and determined as the LET approached. My nervousness decreased because I told myself I needed to help myself, so I reviewed even more”.

Participant II emphasized the crucial role of self-development in achieving her goal of becoming a professional teacher despite facing significant personal challenges, such as a toxic relationship and family issues, which had previously disrupted her review process. She took proactive steps to improve her preparation for the LEPT on her second attempt, including enrolling in a review center to access high-quality learning materials and avoiding distracting social activities, such as extravagant travels. Mubarok et al. (2020) suggest that a strong self-concept is reflected in decisions that facilitate success. Participant II’s ability to navigate these difficulties while focusing on her long-term aspirations demonstrated her commitment and ultimately contributed to her success in the licensure examination. Similarly, Participant VI revealed that:

“Believing in myself became my key ingredient to pass the LEPT. I constantly told myself that self-confidence was crucial. While reviewing, I always repeated to myself, I can do this, I will pass this”.

Participant VI attributes his successful attempt at passing the LEPT to his self-confidence, which fueled his perseverance and resourcefulness during preparation. Despite the challenges of managing responsibilities as the primary provider for his family, he utilized freely available learning materials online to aid his studies. Aslan and Sahin (2020) highlight that highly self-confident learners demonstrate resourcefulness in achieving their goals. The postponement of the LEPT due to the pandemic provided him with additional time to enhance his readiness for the exam. Verdadero et al. (2022) suggest that their knowledge and experiences shape self-confidence in prospective professionals. The impact of his previous failure profoundly influenced Participant VI’s commitment to succeed, leading him to make substantial efforts in his second attempt. Similarly, participant I mentioned that:

“If you have a to-do list, you should follow it because having self-discipline, time management, and concentration are essential for preparing for the board exam, as that should be your priority”.

Participant, I emphasized that self-discipline was crucial for maximizing her preparation for the licensure examination. She attributed her previous failure to a lack of discipline in adhering to a rigorous study schedule. This setback was a valuable learning experience, leading her to understand the importance of self-discipline and self-control in achieving professional development. Duckworth et al. (2019) argue that self-control involves aligning one’s mindset and actions with desired goals while resisting distractions. Through cultivating self-discipline, I managed the participant’s time effectively and maintained focus, free from distractions. Dotson (2016) supports this, noting that success often requires self-initiated actions and a strong commitment to goal-setting. Similarly, Participant IV stated that:

“Failing the LET also helped me with self-discipline, especially in my time management. I realized I need to follow it and not compromise with myself during review because once you start doing something else, you lose focus and won’t be able to review properly”.

The self-discipline of Participant IV significantly enhanced her preparation for the LEPT, particularly in managing her time effectively, an area she struggled with during her first attempt. According to Binayao and Dales (2020), successful board exam passers typically exhibit higher persistence and discipline in their review efforts than those who do not pass. Initially unaware of the LEPT's three distinct components, Participant IV's limited review led to her first attempt's failure. Demazière (2020) notes that a lack of self-discipline can significantly hinder success. However, with improved self-discipline, Participant IV could address all three exam components during her second attempt, attributing her success to her newfound focus.

From the experiences of the Social Studies repeaters, it is evident that their initial challenges and failures provided crucial insights into the necessity of self-reliance and comprehensive preparation. These realizations motivated them to adopt more effective hands-on preparation strategies, leading to better outcomes in their subsequent attempts.

4.4. Implications

The experience of failure is not merely a setback but a crucible for growth, reshaping the educators' approach to exam preparation and professional development. This aligns with the internal LoC, where individuals recognize that their actions and decisions directly influence their outcomes. The study emphasizes that actual progress emerges from the ability to embrace failure as a catalyst for deeper understanding and personal evolution. This reinforces the idea that resilience and the capacity to learn from adversity are essential for success.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the importance of holistic preparation that extends beyond academic knowledge to include the alignment of equally essential life aspects. This comprehensive approach suggests that achieving success requires a well-rounded effort, reflecting an internal LoC where individuals take full responsibility for their preparation and outcomes. It emphasizes that fulfillment and achievement are most attainable when individuals address their needs rather than relying on external factors or conventional methods alone.

Finally, recognizing the self as the primary key to passing the licensure examination underscores the core of human agency within the LoC. The journey of the repeaters illustrates that the ultimate key to success lies within their efforts and mindset despite facing challenges. The insight resonates with the internal LoC, where individuals understand their success is shaped by their self-awareness, rigorous preparation, and resilient attitude. It reinforces that the power to shape one's destiny resides within the individual rather than in external circumstances.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Social Studies repeaters determined to pass the licensure examination on their next attempt often engage in a rigorous and comprehensive preparation regimen incorporating strategies and insights gained from their initial failure. The experience of not passing the LEPT serves as a pivotal learning opportunity that compels individuals to reflect on encountered challenges and identify areas for improvement. The introspection fosters a heightened motivation and commitment to succeed, driving them to approach studies with renewed diligence and focus. Furthermore, Social Studies repeaters recognize that their success hinges largely on personal effort and dedication. The realization instills a disciplined approach to preparation, encompassing effective time management, adherence to study schedules, and prioritization of essential study materials. Repeaters and all prospective educators aiming for a professional license can significantly enhance their readiness for the

licensure examination by integrating the insights into their preparation strategies. The approach will strengthen their resilience and determination and equip them to attain professional teaching licenses successfully.

It is recommended that TEIs worldwide establish structured initiatives that will incorporate the lessons learned from the experiences in teacher certification and licensure exams, such as the LEPT, to improve the passing rates and overall success in teacher education programs. The strategies should include tailored coaching and mentoring initiatives designed to foster resilience and motivation among repeaters. The programs can help prospective educators identify and address personal weaknesses by emphasizing self-reflection and personalized study plans. Also, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and accountability within TEIs can strengthen the commitment to rigorous preparation. Implementing the strategies can enhance teacher quality at a local level and on an international scale, contributing to the global advancement of education standards.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTION

The manuscript clearly identifies a research gap; the manuscript opens new directions for further research.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CRedit: **Francis Edward A. Blanco**: Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal Analysis, Investigation, Writing - Original Draft, Supervision.

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