



Bridging the Gap: Assessing Entry Competency Level of First-Year College Students

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ABSTRACT :

In the landscape of higher education, the successful transition of incoming first-year college students is a critical juncture that profoundly impacts their academic journey. Thus, this research was conducted to assess the entry competency level of first-year college students in different subject areas, integrating a diverse range of factors that collectively contribute to their preparedness for higher education. As such, data used was secondary data taken from the office of the Guidance which has been gathered during the admission process. This study used quantitative approach with a qualitative data as a form of affirmation from the teacher participants of this study. In which, result of this study showed that on average, students demonstrated a fair level of competence in General Information, English, Science, Mathematics, and achieved a satisfactory level in Filipino. Moreover, no significant difference was found on the entry competency level of the students when grouped as to their profile which underscores that they have same level of competencies regardless of their profile variables. Thus, with this result, an action plan was proposed. As such, understanding the entry competency level of these students is paramount, as it serves as a foundation for tailoring support systems and interventions that can enhance their collegiate experience.

Keywords: entry competency, general information, mathematics, english, science, achievement

INTRODUCTION

Entering college is a multifaceted experience that brings about a range of emotions and opportunities. It's a time for personal growth, academic exploration, and the development of critical life skills. Reflecting on this transition can help you appreciate the journey, understand the challenges, and make the most of your college experience. Governments, higher education institutions (HEIs), international governmental organizations, and the corporate sector have all recently shown an increasing interest in the benefits that micro-credentials can provide. These organizations in the public and private sectors are having to deal with new economic and workforce imperatives as a result of the COVID-19 epidemic (Carnevale, 2020). One of the characteristics of the university student is to be competitive due to the dynamic environment in which he operates daily. On the other hand, assessing the level of competency of students entering college is a critical aspect of higher education. It not only helps educational institutions determine the readiness of incoming students but also enables students to make informed choices about their academic journey.

This assessment encompasses a comprehensive evaluation of a student's knowledge, skills, and preparedness, specifically academically, for the challenges of higher education. The process of gauging the level of competency takes into account various factors such as standardized test scores, high school transcripts, personal statements, and extracurricular activities. It plays a pivotal role in matching students to the appropriate college programs and support systems, ensuring they have the best opportunity to excel in their chosen fields of study. The shift to college marks a momentous leap for students, one where they encounter new academic challenges, greater personal responsibilities, and increased independence. As such, institutions of higher education must carefully consider the competencies of incoming students to provide the necessary support and guidance. Numerous academic papers and studies

have investigated the factors contributing to a student's readiness for college.

Any HEI's primary duty is to evaluate learning and give it a credential by awarding certificates and degrees. As institutions, HEIs are prepared and knowledgeable to evaluate the standard of learning for formal academic credit. The creation, sharing, and consumption of educational content on the web are all being changed by digital media. The fact that people who access digital learning resources on the Web and gain knowledge and skills either formally or informally find it difficult to get the proper formal credit for their efforts is a serious challenge, especially for underprivileged learners. These factors encompass not only academic aptitude but also social, emotional, and personal qualities that can significantly impact a student's ability to thrive in the college environment. The global pandemic has brought awareness to professionals who have been mandated to shift to a virtual work environment (S., 2020). As the pandemic continues, the successful transitioning from in-person to online learning can be attributed to the social support faculty have shown to their students and their professional competency in response to an unfamiliar and often unfriendly technology-based teaching platform.

Specifically, this aims to:

1. Determine the profile of the respondents in terms of:
 - 1.1 Program
 - 1.2 Municipality
 - 1.3 Type of School Graduated From
2. Determine the entry competency level of the respondents across different subject areas.
3. Examine the significant difference on the entry competency level of the respondents when they are grouped as to their profile.
4. Identify the performance of the first-year students as perceived by the teacher participant.
5. Formulate action plan based on the result.

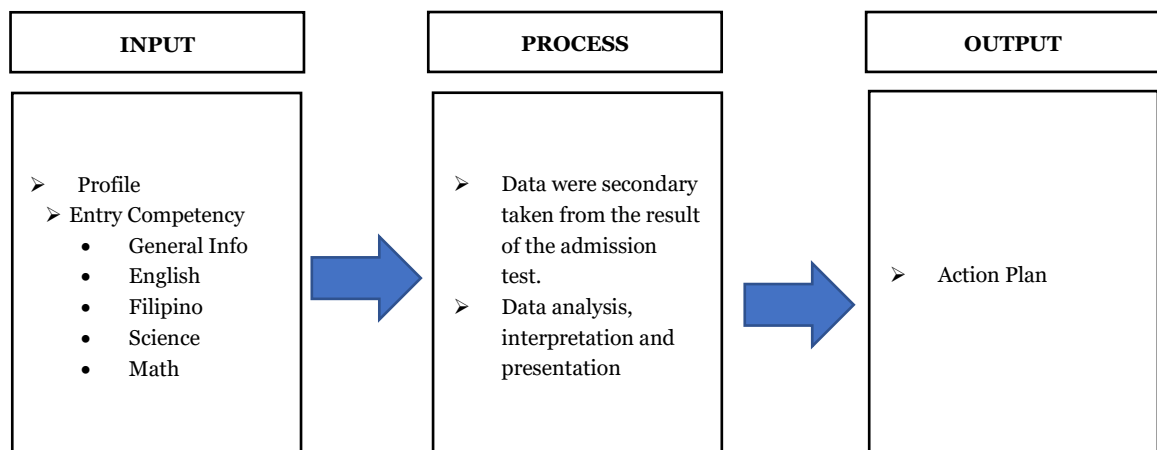


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

This conceptual framework implies that the educational institution or program recognizes the importance of understanding the proficiency of students in key subjects upon entry. By collecting data through admission tests, the institution aims to identify the strengths and weaknesses of incoming students. The ultimate goal is to use this information to create an action plan, which could include specific educational interventions, support programs, or curriculum adjustments to ensure that students receive the necessary guidance and resources to succeed in these subjects.

The action plan may address various aspects, such as providing additional tutoring for students with weaker competencies, offering advanced coursework for those with strong competencies, or adjusting teaching methods to meet the diverse learning needs of the student population.

The framework underscores the significance of data-driven decision-making in education, particularly in the context of student support and academic success.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used the quantitative approach specifically, descriptive-comparative method. Descriptive-comparative for it described the respondents' entry competency level and if there exist a significant difference on this variable when respondents were grouped as to their profile. Data used were secondary for it was acquired with permission from the office of the Guidance Counselor and analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To where, Independent T-Test was used to determine the significant difference on the entry competency level of the respondents across different subject areas when they were grouped as to type of school graduated from, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the other hand, was used to determine the significant difference on the entry competency level across different subject areas when respondents were grouped as to their program and municipality. Also, the following determinants were used.

Mean Percent Score	Level
0.00 – 64.99	Poor
65.00 – 74.99	Fair
75.00 – 84.99	Satisfactory
85.00 – 94.99	Very Satisfactory
95.00 – 100.00	Outstanding

Source: Ocampo (2010)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section provides the result of the study aligned with its objectives.

Section 1. Profile of the Respondents

This section provides the profile of the incoming first year school year 2023-2024 as to perspective program to enrolled, municipality and type of school they graduated from Senior High School.

Table 1. Profile of the Respondents

Profile	f	%
Program		
BS Crim	311	31.9 %
BSCS	85	8.7 %
BAELS	23	2.4 %
BEED	111	11.4 %
BSBA	83	8.5 %
BS Entrepreneurship	17	1.7 %
BSCE	137	14.0 %
BSHM	66	6.8 %
BS Midwifery	133	13.6 %
BS Math	10	1.0 %
Municipality		
Aglipay	158	16.2 %
Cabarroguis	329	33.7 %
Diffun	75	7.7 %
Maddela	55	5.6 %
Nagtipunan	126	12.9 %
Saguday	86	8.8 %
Outside Quirino	147	15.1 %
Type of School Graduated From		
Public	930	95.3 %
Private	46	4.7 %
Total		

The data shows that BSCRIM program comprises the highest percentage (31.9%) of respondents, indicating it is the most prevalent program among the participants. Conversely, BS Mathematocs has the lowest percentage (1.0%), suggesting it has the smallest representation among the respondents. As to municipality, Cabarroguis has the highest percentage (33.7%) of respondents, indicating that it is the most heavily represented municipality in the study. Conversely, Maddela and Saguday have lower percentages (5.6% and 8.8% respectively), indicating fewer respondents from these areas. Lastly, in terms

of the type of school they graduated from, the majority of respondents (95.3%) graduated from public schools, while a smaller percentage (4.7%) graduated from private schools. This indicates a predominantly public-school-educated respondent pool.

Section 2. Entry Competency of First Year Students Along Different Subject Areas

This section provides the entry competency level on different subject areas of the first-year students taken during their admission test.

Table 2. Entry Competency Level of First Year Students Along Different Subject Areas

Subject Area	Mean Percent Score	Description
General Information	73.05	Fair
Filipino	76.55	Satisfactory
English	72.19	Fair
Science	69.59	Fair
Mathematics	66.09	Fair
General MPS	71.49	Fair

Legend: 0 – 64.99 = Poor; 65 – 74.99 = Fair; 75 – 84.99 = Satisfactory; 85 – 94.99 = Very Satisfactory; 95 – 100 = Outstanding

The table shows entry competency levels of first-year students across various subject areas. As such, mean percent scores indicate that, on average, students demonstrated a fair level of competence in General Information (73.05%), English (72.19%), Science (69.59%), Mathematics (66.09%), and achieved a satisfactory level in Filipino (76.55%).

This implies that, a large proportion of first-year students enter with a fair to satisfactory level of competency across various subject areas.

A study by Garcia and Hernandez (2018) observed similar trends in entry-level competencies, emphasizing the need for tailored academic support programs to bridge gaps in specific subjects. Additionally, research by Martinez and Santos (2020) found comparable mean scores in English and Mathematics among first-year students, highlighting the consistent trend of entry-level competency in these areas.

Section 3. Test of Difference on the Entry Competency Level of the Respondents Across Different Subject Areas

Table 3. Analysis of Variance on the Entry Competency Level of the Respondents Along Different Subject Areas when they were grouped by Program

Subject Areas	f	p-value	Decision
General Information	.515	.865	Failed to Reject Ho
Filipino	1.851	.056	Failed to Reject Ho
English	1.332	.216	Failed to Reject Ho
Science	1.904	.048	Reject Ho
Mathematics	1.133	.336	Failed to Reject Ho

The table shows the analysis of variance (ANOVA) conducted on the entry competency levels of the respondents across various subject areas, when grouped by program. The subject areas examined were General Information, Filipino, English, Science, and Mathematics. The results indicated that there were no significant differences in entry competency levels of respondents in General Information ($f = .515$, $p = .865$), Filipino ($f = 1.851$, $p = .056$), English ($f = 1.332$, $p = .216$), and Mathematics ($f = 1.133$, $p = .336$). These results suggest that, regardless of the program they were enrolled in, respondents displayed similar entry competency levels across these subject areas.

However, a noteworthy finding emerged in the case of Science ($f = 1.904$, $p = .048$). The p-value is less than 0.05, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis (Ho). This implies that there is a discernible difference in entry competency levels among different programs in Science.

This result is consistent with research finding of Brown et al. (2019) which demonstrated that students in different programs may possess varying levels of entry competency in science-related subjects.

Table 4. Analysis of Variance on the Mean Score of the Respondents Along Different Subject Areas when they were grouped by their Municipality

Subject Areas	f	p-value	Decision
General Information	.640	.699	Failed to Reject Ho
Filipino	1.371	.223	Failed to Reject Ho
English	1.607	.142	Failed to Reject Ho
Science	.736	.621	Failed to Reject Ho
Mathematics	1.451	.192	Failed to Reject Ho

The table above shows that p-values were all greater than 0.05. Thus, this implies that there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) which states that there are no significant differences in entry competency level among respondents from different municipalities. It's worth noting that while the t-value for Mathematics (-1.951) approached statistical significance with a p-value of 0.051, it still falls short of the conventional threshold.

This finding is similar with the study conducted by Johnson et al. (2018) where they found similar non-significant variations in mean scores across different subject areas when students were grouped by their municipalities. This suggests that factors other than geographic location may play a more influential role in determining academic performance.

Table 5. T-test on the Entry Competency Level of the Respondents Along Different Subject Areas when they were grouped by Type of School Graduated From

Subject Areas	t	p-value	Decision
General Information	1.823	.358	Failed to Reject H_0
Filipino	2.858	.404	Failed to Reject H_0
English	1.869	.080	Failed to Reject H_0
Science	.018	.842	Failed to Reject H_0
Mathematics	19.841	.099	Failed to Reject H_0

The table above revealed that there were no significant differences in entry competency levels between respondents from different types of schools in General Information ($t = 1.823$, $p = .358$), Filipino ($t = 2.858$, $p = .404$), English ($t = 1.869$, $p = .080$), Science ($t = .018$, $p = .842$), and Mathematics ($t = 19.841$, $p = .099$).

This result implies that the type of school a respondent graduated from did not significantly impact their entry competency levels in these subject areas.

This outcome aligns with the study of Johnson et al. (2017) in which it has explored the influence of school type on academic performance. As such, in certain contexts, the type of school attended may not be a strong predictor of student performance in specific subjects.

In summary, the t-test results indicate that the type of school a respondent graduated from does not appear to have a substantial influence on their entry competency levels in the subject areas examined. These findings contribute to the ongoing discussion about the factors that may affect academic performance and highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of the role of school type in shaping students' competencies.

Section 4.

This section presents the performance of the first-year students as perceived by the teachers. In which, the following were generated:

A. Foundational Conceptual Challenges:

Teachers discern a foundational struggle among students, noting challenges in grasping basic concepts crucial to their academic journey.

B. Sentence Composition Struggles:

Teachers observe difficulties in sentence construction, highlighting a need for focused attention on enhancing students' ability to articulate ideas coherently.

C. Spelling Accuracy Issues:

Teachers identify instances of spelling errors, emphasizing the importance of honing students' attention to detail and accuracy in written expression.

D. Grammar Precision Concerns:

Teachers point out concerns related to grammar, urging a closer examination and improvement of students' grasp on fundamental grammatical rules.

E. An Assessment of Conceptual Errors:

Teachers note a presence of errors in understanding basic concepts, prompting a detailed exploration of areas where clarification and reinforcement are essential.

Section 5.

This section provides an insight on the proposed action plan in

Table 6. Plan of Action

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	ACTIVITIES	EXPECTED OUTPUT
For Instruction			
To implement effective teaching methods that cater to the diverse learning styles of the students. Through this approach, we aim to create an engaging and participatory environment in different areas of classes, promoting active learning and critical thinking.	- Flipped Classroom Approach - Active Learning Techniques - Peer Learning and Collaboration - Integration of Technology	- Encourage active participation through group discussions, debates, and interactive lessons. - Create a student-centered classroom environment. - Implement regular quizzes, writing assignments, and presentations to assess student progress. - Provide timely and constructive feedback to students.	- It leads to students being more prepared and displaying a more profound grasp of the subject matter. - It promotes the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills, fostering enthusiasm for the different subjects. - It contributes to a richer understanding of the concepts of the different areas, ultimately nurturing a love for the subject through shared learning experiences.
For Students			
To improve students' skills, nurturing their capacity to articulate ideas effectively and engage in meaningful participation. Actively promoting classroom discussions and cultivating active listening skills are integral components of this comprehensive approach to language development.	- Public Speaking Workshops - Reflection Journals - Teacher Modeling	- Conduct workshops that focus on building their confidence in the crowd. Provide opportunities for students to deliver and present their outputs. - Model effective learning for students during lessons and discussions. Demonstrating these skills can serve as a valuable example for students to emulate.	- To equip students with the skills and confidence they need to communicate effectively in various settings and scenarios, both in and out of the classroom. - It sets a valuable example for students to follow and helps them develop essential skills for both academic and real-world success.

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE WORKS

A significant proportion of first-year students enter with a fair to satisfactory level of competency across various subject areas. This underscores the importance of implementing targeted interventions and support mechanisms to enhance academic performance and ensure a smooth transition into higher education.

Since a significant difference was observed in the subject of Science, indicating potential program-specific influences on initial competency levels, underlining the importance of program specialization in shaping students' entry competencies in specific subjects.

Result on test of significant difference on the entry competency level of the respondents when grouped as to municipality underscore the complexity of factors influencing academic performance, with geographic location appearing to have a minimal direct impact in this particular study. This suggests that targeted interventions and support programs should focus on a broader array of factors beyond municipality to effectively enhance student performance across various subject areas.

Type of school a respondent graduated from does not appear to have a substantial influence on their entry competency levels in the subject areas examined. These findings contribute to the ongoing discussion about the factors that may affect academic performance and highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of the role of school type in shaping students' competencies.

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