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ABSTRACT

Determinants of student performance in the National Secondary Achievement Test (NSAT) were investigated in this study. It aimed to identify the factors that affect student performance in the science component of the NSAT. It was conducted to assess the interplay of curriculum context and instructional processes and practices as factors that affect the students' performance in the test.

Quantitative analysis included the comparison of school profiles as associated with the student NSAT performance in the science are while qualitative analysis included the classroom discourses that depict what a science teacher is in terms of instructional process followed by them.

The sample consisted of 638 Palawan State University freshman students who came from the 78 secondary schools within the school divisions of Palawan during the Academic Year 2001-2002.

Data were gathered through questionnaire, checklist, interview guide, class observations, IQ test and scores in the NSAT.

Results show that in terms of students' profile, the sample had more females than males. Most of them are AVERAGE learners. All of them are currently enrolled at the Palawan State University – College of Science (23%), 22% are the College of Humanities, 20% at the College of Education, 18% at the College of Business and Accountancy (where the students who obtained the highest NSAT mean scored are now enrolled), and 17% at the College of Engineering and Technology.

Most of the respondents are interested in science, but in general, their attitude towards science mostly falls within the neutral category, neither distinctly positive nor negative.

The learning styles of the majority of the respondents can be described as follows: (a) in *Perceptual Processing*, they are CONCRETE learners, preferring visual and tactile modes; (b) in *Processing Information*, they are INTERMEDIATE between passive and active processors of information; (c) as for *Motivation*, they are SUPERFICIAL, preferring external stimuli that are more appealing, familiar and less complex; and (d) as to *Personality*, they are MODERATELY SELF-CONFIDENT learners, preferring to work independently, clever and not afraid to leave unfinished tasks.

As for the parents' characteristics, the findings reveal that most of the respondents have mothers who are college graduates, although most of them are not working. Majority of the fathers are high school graduates.

The students' GWA, IQ, attitude and age significantly relate to NSAT performance. The higher the IQ and GWA, the better is the science NSAT performance, the most positive their attitude towards science and the better is their NSAT performance. The older they are, the poorer is their NSAT performance (WEAK NEGATIVE CORRELATION).

Results show no significant relationships between school characteristics and NSAT performance in the science component of the test.

In terms of teacher characteristics, most of the teacher-respondents graduated with a degree of Bachelor of Secondary Education. A great number of them are 41-45 years old. The teachers are female-dominated. Many have been teaching for 32 years although a good number of them have been teaching science for five years or less. Majority of them are based in public schools in rural areas. Most of them attend local seminars.

There appears to be no strong positive and significant relationship between their personal characteristics and instructional processes/practices.

The observed pattern of the instructional process of the teachers include the following: (a) lectures, classroom discussion and problem-solving for instructional strategies; (b) observation, communication, classification, number recognition and problem-solving on the process skills taught; (c) cognitive memory, comprehension and analysis for types and levels of questions asked; (d) completion and selection type of tests for the type of evaluation. Lastly, they used highly varied instructional materials.