

Factors that Contribute to Topping the Board Licensure Examination for Certified Public Accountant

Emmanuel James P. Pattaguan (Ph.D.)

Vice-President for Academics
University of Saint Louis
Tuguegarao City, Philippines

Abstract

Studies on individuals topping the board examinations, much more in the field of accountancy education, are nil or in dearth, thus the inspiration to conduct this study. This study was aimed at finding out the profile of three participant cases and the factors that led them to top the Board Licensure Examination for Certified Public Accountants (BLECPA). It's a study that was anchored on Mueller's Theory of Iceberg and Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity. Using Qualitative-Descriptive research design, findings showed some common characteristics shared by the achievers and factors that led them to top the BLECPA. Results from the study confirms in most part Mueller's and Walberg's Theories in which factors that led individuals to succeed have been identified. Implications of the results of the study to existing knowledge and BS Accountancy program implementation were also established.

Keywords: Excellence in Accounting Education, Student Performance, Academic Achievement, Topping the Examinations, Student Achievement, Student Excellence

Introduction

Everyone in this world always desires to succeed. Regardless of characteristics, one always wishes to achieve his/her goals. Benna (2015), citing St John's eight traits the world's most successful people share expounds that: "Each person's path to success may be unique, but there are many commonalities among the world's most successful people."

The question is thus far, what makes people succeed over the others? Economy (2015), in his article Six Habits of Super Successful People asserts: "Why are some people more successful than others? There's really no mystery: It's because they do things differently than people who are less successful." If Economy's thoughts are in place, then there must be some underlying explanations why people succeed in life.

In the Philippines, the government through the Professional Regulation Commission (PRC) administers a licensure Examination to graduates of board courses. One of these courses is the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy (BSAc). BSAc is a four or five-year course that culminates with a student taking a licensure examination called Board Licensure Examination for Certified Public Accountant (BLECPA). BLECPA is held twice a year in May and October. Takers

who passed the BLECPA are afforded the rights to the Accounting Profession in the country. In each of the examination, the top ten passers are recognized. Passing the BLECPA is one, but topping it is another, giving an inspiration to the researcher to pursue this study.

One of the top accounting schools in Northern Philippines, has very high passing percentage compared to national passing percentage of its graduates. On top of this, the said university also produces top ten placers through the years. The most unprecedented is of course its 3-peat achievement of producing first placers in the BLECPA. Inspired by this achievement, the researcher was prodded to find out the factors that made them achieve the coveted top title. In this attempt at looking at the reasons why these cases succeeded or topped the board examination, a careful search was undertaken. The attempt to know commonalities among these BLECPA toprnotch individuals, what made them achieve and what made them shine over the others propelled this study.

Statement of the Objectives

This pioneering study sought to present the success story of three cases of graduates who topped the BLECPA. Its objectives were to 1) Determine the common characteristics of the participant-cases from among series of characteristics being asked of them and 2) Identify the factors that led the participant-cases to top the CPA Board Examination

Review of Related Literature

Underpinning Theories

Steve Mueller's Iceberg Theory of Success and Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity are advanced in this case study. Mueller says that "this theory helps us to realize that every famous or extraordinary successful person had to invest a lot of effort and work until this person achieved his goals. Having this in mind we can avoid having too high expectations towards an outcome that we want to achieve, but it also allows us to be more persistent, as we can clarify ourselves that we have to do "whatever it takes" to succeed."

In this study, Mueller's Theory is advanced in the light of the success of three individuals with diverse backgrounds and see what were their investments that catapulted their topping the Certified Public Accountant Board Examination.

Mueller further states "The "Iceberg Theory of Success" helps people to realize that every famous or extraordinary successful person had to invest a lot of effort and work until this person achieved his goals. Having this in mind we can avoid having too high expectations towards an outcome that we want to achieve, but it also allows us to be more persistent, as we can clarify ourselves that we have to do "whatever it takes" to succeed."

On the other hand, Kevin McGrew's (2007) work *Beyond IQ: A model of Academic Competence and Motivation* cites

the Walberg's (1981) Theory of Educational Productivity. Said Theory also guided this study. Moreover, McGrew further cites "Walberg's model specifies that:

"Classroom learning is a multiplicative, diminishing-returns function of four essential factors student ability and motivation, and quality and quantity of instruction and possibly four supplementary or supportive factors the social psychological environment of the classroom, education-stimulating conditions in the home and peer group, and exposure to mass media. Each of the essential factors appears to be necessary but insufficient by itself for classroom learning; that is, all four of these factors appear required at least at minimum level. It also appears that the essential factors may substitute, compensate, or tradeoff for one another in diminishing rates of return: for example, immense quantities of time may be required for a moderate amount of learning to occur if motivation, ability, or quality of instruction is minimal (Haertel et al., 1983, p. 76)."

Characteristics of Students and Achievement

Paul (2013) citing Ken Bain's "What the Best College Students Do" asserts that a road map for how students can get the most out of college, no matter where they go is drawn. Accordingly, there are three types of learners to wit: 1) surface-who do as little as possible to get by, 2) strategic-who aim for top grades rather than true understanding and deep learners-who leave college with a real, rich education.

In the same article of Bain, Paul (2013) further cites his work that introduces host of real-life deep learners: young and old, scientific and artistic, famous or still getting there. Common patterns of stories of deep learners were identified: 1) those who pursue passion and not the A's, 2) Getting comfortable with failure, 3) Making a personal connection to studies, 4) Reading and thinking actively, 5) Cultivating empathy for others, and 6) Setting goals and making them real.

Kuh (2007) in his article "How to help students achieve relates: The results of our survey and my own extensive research into the topic suggests six concrete steps that institutions can take to engage students: 1) Teach first-year students as early as possible how to use college resources effectively, 2) Make the classroom the locus of community. Kuh (2007) further says, decades ago, when most undergraduates lived near their classmates and teachers, proximity and serendipity established the social order and instilled shared values and understandings, 3) Develop networks and early-warning systems to support students when they need help, 4) Connect every student in a meaningful way with some activity or positive role model. When students are responsible for tasks that require daily decisions over an extended period, they become invested in the activity that deepens their commitment to the college and their studies, 5) If a program or practice works, make it widely available and 6) Remove obstacles to student engagement and success.

Teachers' and Students' Achievement

The role teachers' play in education has always been touted by educationists and experts as paramount in the development of students. In pursuing their tasks or roles as educators, they either make or unmake a person. The "making of students" or positive development of students is espoused in Price-Mitchell's (2015) The Compass Advantage™ model. This model is a visual, research-based, engaging way for families, schools, and communities to apply the principles of positive youth development. This to him is a framework for understanding why kids need these interconnected abilities and how they're nurtured in different contexts. Furthermore, this is also a call to act on behalf of children who deserve to live full, meaningful lives beyond external measures of success.

Additionally, Price-Mitchell (2015) asserts that The Compass Advantage™ views education and child development as integrated processes nurtured through the collaborative efforts of parents, teachers, and out-of-school programs. In his exact words, Price Mitchell 8 attributes of a student who succeeds in education as 1)Curiosity- the ability to seek and acquire new knowledge, skills, and ways of understanding the world, 2)Sociability- the joyful, cooperative ability to engage with others, 3)Resilience- the ability to meet and overcome challenges in ways that maintain or promote well-being, 4)Self-Awareness-the ability to examine and understand who we are relative to the world around us, 5)Integrity-the ability to act consistently with the values, beliefs, and principles that we claim to hold, 6)Resourcefulness- the ability to find and use available resources to achieve goals, problem solve, and shape the future, 7) Creativity- the ability to generate and communicate original ideas and appreciate the nature of beauty, and 8)Empathy-the ability to recognize, feel, and respond to the needs and suffering of others.

Darling Hammond (2000) who did qualitative and quantitative analyses of teacher quality and achievement suggests that policy investments contribute to student performance. Furthermore, she states that quantitative analyses indicate that teacher preparation and certification measures are strongest correlates to student performance.

Sanders et al in their study, examined the relative magnitude of teacher effects on student achievement while simultaneously considering the influences of intra-classroom heterogeneity, student achievement level, and class size on academic growth. They found out that teacher effects are dominant factors affecting student academic gain and that the classroom context variables of heterogeneity among students and class sizes have relatively little influence on academic gain. They arrived at a major conclusion, that teachers make a difference.

Accounting Curriculum and Students' Achievement

Stivers & Phillips (2009) in their article: Assessment of

student learning: A fast-track Experience assert that the professional accreditation agencies are making demands for assessment of student learning and that these demands are not expected to lessen in the near future. In their paper, they state that accreditation agencies are suggesting that educators should shift their focus from what faculty teaches to what students learn.

Simons & Lowe (1995). In their article A profile of communication apprehension in accounting majors: Implications for teaching and curriculum revision conducted a study in view of the need to understand accounting students' skills in both oral and written communication and its necessity in the curriculum. The authors then where felt the need to determine the level of apprehension in accounting majors prior to making curriculum/classroom changes. In their study, they examined the level of communication apprehension in accounting majors. Findings showed that accounting majors have higher apprehension toward both written and oral communications than other business majors. Moreover, gender differences were found only for oral communication apprehension, with female accounting majors reporting the highest apprehension.

Booth & Mladenovic (1999) studied the impact of approaches to learning on academic performance as a measure of quality in accounting education. In their article, they investigated the learning approaches of accounting students from two Australian universities as compared to previously reported data for Australian arts, education and science students. Moreover, they consider the impact of accounting students' approaches to learning on their academic performance. They also collected Data about learning approaches, using the Study Process Questionnaire and various attitudinal and performance variables. The comparison of the learning approach scores of accounting students with previously reported norms for Australian arts, education and science students, indicated that the former had relatively higher surface and lower deep learning approaches. Likewise, they found that higher surface approach scores were associated with less successful academic performance, but no association was found for deep approach scores.

Study Habits and Students' Achievement

There are few articles, if not nil, that show the relationship or effect of study habits, attitudes of students and related variables especially in the field of accountancy education.

One such study that is related to this paper is that of Krohn & O'Connor (2005) in their research entitled: Student effort and performance over the semester. Albeit it's a study within a term, the researcher found that this article supports in one way or the other the current study. In their study, they found out that(1) students respond to higher midterm scores by reducing the number of hours they subsequently allocate to

studying for the course; (2) contrary to results based on semester totals, class attendance is not related to examination scores throughout the semester; (3) study time has a small, but statistically significant, negative effect on student performance; and (4) although men outperform women on examinations, the difference may diminish over the course of the semester.

How Much Do Study Habits, Skills, and Attitudes Affect Student Performance in Introductory College Accounting Courses? was a study conducted by Yu (2011). In his paper, he found that math proficiency, English proficiency, high school accounting, and academic aptitude influence accounting performance, supporting the findings of many previous researches on cognitive factors. Among the Study habits, skills and attitude factors, only student perception of teacher effectiveness and level of effort influence accounting performance. Time spent studying, attendance in review classes conducted in tutorial centers, motivation, and study habits have no significant effect. Upon further analysis comparing high and low performers, study habits show up to be significant as well. In particular, students who performed better are those who did more in terms of reading ahead, doing their homework, participating in class, and cramming for exams.

Nonis & Hudson (2006) in their article: Academic performance of college students: Influence of time spent studying and working, they examined the effect of both time spent studying and time spent working on academic performance. The authors likewise, further evaluated the interaction of motivation and ability with study time and its effect on academic performance. Findings suggest that non-ability variables like motivation and study time significantly interact with ability to influence academic performance. Contrary to popular belief, the amount of time spent studying or at work had no direct influence on academic performance.

A follow-up article was presented by Nonis & Hudson (2010) entitled Performance of college students: Impact of study time and study habits, where they studied the influence of a third variable, study habits on performance of students. Based on a sample of business students, results showed some study habits had a positive direct relationship on student performance but others had a negative direct relationship. Results also showed 1 study habit moderated the relationship between study time and student performance positively, but another study habit moderated the relationship negatively.

Learning Resources and Students' Achievement

Greenwald et al. (1996) in their article: The Effect of School Resources on Student Achievement tried to look for variety of education production function studies with the intention assessing the direction and magnitude of the relations between a variety of school inputs and student achievement

using meta-analytic methods. They analyze sixty primary research studies aggregated data at the level of school districts or smaller units and either controlled for socioeconomic characteristics or were longitudinal in design. They found out that a broad range of resources were positively related to student outcomes, with effect sizes large enough to suggest that moderate increases in spending may be associated with significant increases in achievement.

Hanushek, E. A. (1997) in his article: Assessing the effects of school resources on student performance: An update made a review of the available educational production literature, updating previous summaries. He found out that the close to 400 studies of student achievement demonstrate that there is not a strong or consistent relationship between student performance and school resources, at least after variations in family inputs are taken into account. He further found out that the said results were in sync with meta-analytic approaches and with other investigations on how school resources affect labor market outcomes. In addition, he stated that simple resource policies hold little hope for improving student outcomes.

Family and Student Achievement

Bacolod & King (2000) in their study: The effects of family background and school quality on low and high achievers: Determinants of academic achievement in the Philippines did quartile regressions as applied to Philippine data to estimate the differential impact of inputs on students at various points on the conditional achievement distribution. In their study, variation in the students who attend schools outside their district, students who do not attend the nearest school, and students who transferred schools are used to identify these differential impacts and control for selection. They assert that the results suggest a policy of reducing student to teacher ratios will have a positive effect on raising students' math achievement, but may benefit high achievers more than the average or low achievers. In contrast, the impact of class size on English achievement is greater for the average or median student.

Which Schools succeed or perform well? Henderson & Mapp (2002) in their study entitled A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement Annual Synthesis 2002 National Center for Family and Community Connections with School, indicate that high-performing schools tend to have a combination of many characteristics, which were narrowed into these nine areas: (1) A clear and shared focus; (2) High standards and expectations for all students; (3) Effective school leadership; (4) High levels of collaboration and communication; (5) Curriculum, instruction, and assessments aligned with state standards; (6) Frequent monitoring of teaching and learning; (7) Focused professional development; (8) A supportive

learning environment; (9) High levels of parent and community involvement. From the foregoing, item 9 reveals of parents' involvement and the community as contributory to success of graduates.

Fan & Chen (2001) conducted a meta-analysis to synthesize the quantitative literature about the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement. Results showed a small to moderate, and practically meaningful, relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. The researchers, through moderator analysis, also found out that parental aspiration/expectation for children's education achievement has the strongest relationship, whereas parental home supervision has the weakest relationship, with students' academic achievement. They likewise found, the relationship is stronger when academic achievement is represented by a global indicator (e.g., GPA) than by a subject-specific indicator (e.g., math grade).

Methods

Research Design

This study utilized Qualitative-Descriptive Research Method which sought to present and describe the participant cases based on their own accounts coupled with some validations from parents, teachers and classmates.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in a school in Northern Philippines, and in part in the places of work of the three participant-cases in Manila, Philippines.

Participants

The main participants of this research are the three (3) first placers that the university has produced for the years 2008, 2013 and 2014. Other participants include their parents, teachers and peers/classmates.

Instruments and Procedures

The principal tool used in this research is an in-depth conversation with the participants through a semi-structured interview which elicited demographic information, the participants' family, college life and life during their review for the BLECPA up to the proclamation of the results of the licensure examination.

A focused group discussion (FGD) with the main participants, their parents, schoolmates and teachers were also conducted to further strengthen and or validate the claims of the participant cases. Perusal of secondary data about the participants like their academic history was also conducted.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was used as the procedure in unraveling and understanding the phenomenon of topping the board

examination. The responses of the participants were analyzed and have undergone the four processes of phenomenological study. The first step was bracketing in which the researcher identified and held in abeyance pre-conceived beliefs and opinions. There was no judgment made. The second part was intuiting in which the researcher started to have perceptions in relation to the topping of the board examination. The third part was categorizations and giving meaning to the concept under study. Finally, the phenomenon was described understood and defined.

Ethical Considerations

In keeping with the ethics of the conduct of this research, the identity of the participants in this study was held in anonymity. Consent was sought for conduct of the study from the participants as expressed by them.

Results and Discussion

Profile of Cases

Case Number 1

Topnotch A is a son of a tricycle driver and government employee. The family's gross annual income is P400, 000.00. He has one sibling who is pursuing a BS-Nursing degree. He finished his elementary education in a public school as a valedictorian and also received a Leadership Award, Mathematician of the Year, Journalist of the Year and Scientist of the Year. He then pursued high school in a private Catholic school where he graduated salutatorian and Mercury Award for Mathematics. He graduated Bachelor of Science in Accountancy as cum laude. He also was an academic scholar. He believes that with his sibling, they were trained by their parents to excel. He is guided by the guiding principle or philosophy in life: "Good, Better, Best. Never let it rest. Until your good is better and your better is best." His icon of leadership is his father.

When he entered college, his goal was "to graduate with honors and enjoy college. His study habits include 1) reading theories and answer as many problems as possible and apply and understand fully the theories; 2) Collect all available books from different authors for a given subject for more references; and 3) review while watching television.

During his college days, when there are major examinations he 1) goes through concepts and solves a handful of problems before exams with concentration on review books; 2) eats chocolates before major exams and 3) sleeps and wakes up early (sleeps from 11 p.m. to 2 a.m.). When asked how long he reviews during major examinations, he said at least 8 hours. He is a frequent library user, seeing to it that he goes during free time and between classes and when there are no extra-curricular activities. On his usage of professional books like Accountancy textbooks, he maximizes the same by answering all problems. Besides textbooks he sees to it that he has at least two other references for a given subject.

In the classroom, he participates in recitation, board work. He likewise participates only when called or asked to recite. He tends to be pro-active as needed. As to his teachers, he claims that he had the best mix of professors. Accordingly, he belongs to the batch, which had very strict and most challenging teachers from their first year to fifth year. With this kind of teachers, he said: “we were pushed to study hard thus, well trained and very prepared for the board examinations.”

Outside of the classroom, he was elected governor or leader of the School of Business Administration and Accountancy for two years and an officer in the lower positions from first year to third year. He was also an officer of the Junior Philippine Institute of Accountant, the highest of which was as Vice-President for Academics. He states that he was able to divide his time in studying and doing activities as a student leader. He also confesses that he always participated in quiz bees in and outside of the school which to him was a preparation for the board examination as well.

Lastly, Topnotch A believes that the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy curriculum is heavy with five years and required summers. In addition, he says that the accounting subjects were sufficient and the order of accountancy subjects and the review were on point.

Interview with his parents confirmed Topnotch A's study habits and characteristics. He is a bookworm, and studies his lessons in advance. In fact, the parents have to buy him books upon his request, even ahead of the semester so he can prepare and do advance readings. As a Latin honor graduate, it was to him a pressure. Topnotch confirmed with his mom that he was pressured to top the board as a challenge by the University. On his end, he has to work hard to prepare for the BLECPA to prove that the Latin honor was worth it. It was also confirmed that when he got low in one of the mock boards during the actual review, compared to a classmate, he was further challenged.

The parents likewise shared that as show of support, all the provisions during the actual review prior to the board exams like, laundry, food and the like were religiously provided. Moreover, parents have to constantly communicate to him.

Belatedly, the parents provide him meals that consist of plenty of vegetables and meat, which the mother believed to have contributed to his achievements through and through. One interesting thing, he lately confirmed to his parents was, on occasions that he went out on Saturdays and Sundays, those were days when he met with classmates to help them cope with the rigors of the BSAC Program.

On top of this, he is a home buddy. He is very prayerful and much focused in his activities. When asked about what makes him different with his sibling, the parents said that he is very determined, conscientious in his studies and reads a lot (“reads and reads and reads-according to the mother)

From his mentors and classmates, Topnotch A is indeed very focused in his studies, despite his being a student leader. He has good analytical skills, and is particularly helpful to his classmates.

Case Number 2

Topnotch B is a son of a businessman and a government employee. The family has a gross income of P400,000 and is blessed with three siblings. He completed his elementary education in a public school as second honorable mention and was a consistent quiz bee champion in different competitions. He was valedictorian when he completed his secondary education in a public high school. He likewise was consistent quizzier in high school and has received various awards. In college, he pursued Bachelor of Science in Accountancy degree in a private school and finished with academic distinction. His siblings are for him part of his inspiration. His guiding philosophy is “If others can, why can't I”. His father is both his icon of excellence and leadership.

His goal back in his first year college was “to prove that he could do well even though he studied in his hometown”. He claims that in terms of study habits, he just tends to understand the concepts rather than solve so many reviewers. He reviews a day before the subject during major exams. He likewise tries to finish one reviewer a night before any major examination. “I go to the library so that I may be inspired to read books”, he quips. He ensures that he has a copy of all necessary Accountancy books, though at times it is sidelined because of his leadership functions.

In the classroom, “I challenge the problems when I could not appreciate manner it was solved”, he confirms. As to his teachers, he said that they have different teaching styles and was great in their respective field.

Based on the interview with his parents, topnotch B works even without being told. He is a home buddy and prayerful, and one who does not have many notes in his notebooks as revealed by the mother. When asked by his mother why he does not have writings on the notebooks, he would easily say, I listen to my teachers and understood already the lesson. In college, the parents said, he reads a lot of books. In fact, he also sells some books to classmates and proceeds from the sale allowed him to buy other books for his review.

Of particular interest as revealed by his parents that makes him different from siblings is his, focus in any activity or undertaking, being responsible, even to the extent of doing household chores, likes to accept challenges. The mother recall one day, that when he got a grade below the cut-off for academic awards, that he cried coming home mentioning, he does not have a gift to them on his graduation, it is to be noted that he did not get a Latin award because of this. But his mother quipped, he easily recovered from the challenged and move on to keep himself busy with his being a leader, sandwiched with his academics.

From his teachers and classmates, they know him to be a silent type and very unassuming person, but recites and discusses well when called. He is a deep thinker and has very good analytical skills. He was a two-year governor of the department, and that despite this, he was still able to manage his leadership roles and academics. He reads as many books, and is able to relate one subject to another professional subject. Another teacher especially shared that he has some moods in his review or study habits that sometimes, you don't know if he studies his lessons.

Outside of the classroom, he was a leader of the School of Business Administration and Accountancy, and has served the department in various capacities. At the Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants organization, he actively participated in conventions and or seminars and has been a consistent quizzer and awardee.

As to the Bachelor of Science in Accountancy curriculum, he states that this is alright and that there were some minor subjects that could be replaced with business related courses.

Case Number 3

Topnotch C is a son of both teachers. His family's gross income for a year is P500, 000.00. He completed his elementary in a public school and graduated as the class valedictorian. He then pursued his secondary degree also in a public school and finished as salutatorian. In college, he enrolled in a private school, where he graduated cum laude. He was a consistent academic scholar. He had two siblings.

His icons of excellence are the topnotch graduates of the University where he finished his Accountancy degree. His icons of leadership are his father and the researcher who was his Dean during his college days.

His goal back in his first year in college was to get the coveted professional license as Certified Public Accountant. He studies 1-2 hours but during major exams of prelims, midterms and finals, he spends 1-3 days. He uses the library often and ensures that he has all Accountancy textbooks.

In the classroom, he actively participates in recitation, board works and discussion. He was moreover, an active officer of the Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants where he is a consistent quizzer and awardee.

Interview with his parents revealed supplementary information about Topnotch C, wherein as early as his kinder days, he was able to read ahead even without parental support. He was prayerful and was a home buddy. He does household chores as well. Growing in High school, parents noted that he does his own assignments and reviews on his won in his room. The parents recalled that at one time, when they were choosing a school for him, he was labeled to be a future "topnotcher" by the campaign team of the University. Something peculiar to Topnotch C was his being humble and silent and determined to accomplish in all his endeavors.

From his teachers and classmates, he was studious. He reads many books and goes to class with these books. In class he recites and discusses with the teachers and classmates. It was observed that he does his extra-curricular activities in the morning and studies in the afternoon without fail. He must not be disrupted in his studies in the afternoon.

A digest of the stories of all the participant cases show that all of the participants or achievers in this study are males, home buddies, and are much focused and have positive outlook in life. They have graduated their elementary in public schools. Two of them have finished their secondary education in public school and the three of them in private school for their college. As they are in the same university, they finished a 5-year curriculum instead of the four-year curriculum in some Philippine Higher Education Institutions. They have very good study habits and their academic giftedness has been consistent, them graduating with honors all throughout their elementary to college.

Factors that Contributed to the Achievement of BSAC Graduates who topped the BLECPA

Based on a thorough focused group discussion with the participants, the following factors were revealed:

Study/Review Habits: This is the most important and must be consistent according to the participant cases. They believed that Accounting Subjects need a thorough understanding of concepts. A good focus in studying and reviewing will certainly help according to them. Confirmation of this claim of the participant cases was made with parents who revealed that their sons were very focused in their studies and very determined to accomplish. Their good study habits were characterized with love of reading. The participant cases were bookworms and readers. In addition, their good study habits were coupled with prayer.

Non-ability variables like motivation and study time significantly interact with ability to influence academic performance Nonis & Hudson (2006). Additionally, the latter, citing Bennett & Barkensjob(2005), also found out that academic excellence was more the consequence of an individual's effort and ability than the person's socio-economic background.

Moreover, Nonis & Hudson (2010)'s follow-up study on the influence of a third variable, study habits on performance of students showed that on a sample of business students, some study habits had a positive direct relationship on student performance but others had a negative direct relationship. Additionally, it was also established by the said authors that study habit moderated the relationship between study time and student performance positively, but another study habit moderated the relationship negatively.

Likewise, Yu (2011) found out in comparing high and low performers, study habits show up to be significant as well. In particular, he found out those students who performed better

are those who did more in terms of reading ahead, doing their homework, participating in class, and cramming for exams.

Family: The top BLECPA graduates are all one in saying that their family is a source of inspiration in topping the board examination. Family, most importantly their parents have contributed to their achievement for the constant reminders for them to study well. In particular, the influence of the fathers, even to the extent of labeling them as icons of leadership, has been attributed to have strong contribution to the achievement of the participants. Siblings on the other hand have been confirmed not to have significantly influenced them in their achievements.

Fan & Chen (2001) conducted a meta-analysis to synthesize the quantitative literature about the relationship between parental involvement and students' academic achievement. They found out that there is a small to moderate, and practically meaningful, relationship between parental involvement and academic achievement. The researchers, through moderator analysis, also found out that parental aspiration/expectation for children's education achievement has the strongest relationship, whereas parental home supervision has the weakest relationship, with students' academic achievement. They likewise found, the relationship is stronger when academic achievement is represented by a global indicator (e.g., GPA) than by a subject-specific indicator (e.g., math grade).

The impact of family to achievement is likewise being supported further by the Henderson, & Mapp (2002) Schools that perform well are those schools have a combination of many characteristics, which were narrowed into these nine areas one of which is "high levels of parent and community involvement".

Schoolmates/classmates: Schoolmates or classmates boosted their confidence. They also served as study mates. Accordingly, their schoolmates motivated them in their preparation while in college/school. In a previous study made by Pattaguan (2016) on outcomes based accountancy education in the experience of a university, one of the best practices of an institution is the use of study groups that allow students to review their lessons and eventually, in their review sessions in the board exam, with classmates as study groups or review buddies.

Holloway (2001) concludes in his article that special grouping arrangements can bring about increased student learning based on ability and other classroom arrangements.

School Teachers: The participants acknowledged that their college instructors especially their professional subject teachers challenged and motivated them to study hard. They claim, they had a good balance of strict to very strict faculty that really helped them in their preparation for the board examination. These thoughts of the topnotch graduates are

being supported by several studies. One such paper is that of Price-Mitchell (2015) who views education and child development as integrated processes nurtured through the collaborative efforts of parents, teachers, and out-of-school programs. The above claims of the topnotch graduates are also being confirmed by Sanders, et. al (1997) that teacher effectiveness are dominant factors affecting student academic gain.

Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (2000) on teacher quality and achievement across states also supports the role teachers' play on achievement of students. One of the findings made is "when aggregated at the state level, teacher quality variables appear to be more strongly related to student achievement than class sizes, overall spending levels, teacher salaries (at least when unadjusted for cost of living differentials), or such factors as the statewide proportion of staff who are teachers. She also stated that "both the qualitative and quantitative analyses suggest that policy investments in the quality of teachers may be related to improvements in student performance.

In addition, Yu (2011) states that among the study habits, skills and attitude factors, only student perception of teacher effectiveness and level of effort influence accounting performance.

School Administrators: The administrators, especially the Dean of the BS Accountancy program, were keys in providing the good environment to hone their skills to top the board examination. The policies crafted that ensured that only the best students were retained in the program is attributable to the excellent administrator of the program. The much focused administration of the BSAC program by the administrators of the university, have continuously produced topnotch passers in the BLECPA. These School Administrators also serve as prayer warriors and inspiration before, during and after the board examination.

Bachelor of Science in Accountancy Curriculum: The Bachelor of Science in Accountancy Curriculum is duly noted by the achievers to be contributory to their topping the board exams. The curriculum is described by the participants as sufficient and orderly arranged. They equipped the participants of the foundation necessary in the actual board examination. The inclusion of Review in the curriculum is a very good preparation for the board as it provided reiterations of subjects taken for the first three to four years in college. The University's BSAC Curriculum is a five- year program compared to other schools which has four years.

While there are not much studies that directly link curriculum to achievement of students, some papers that can be attributed are as follows:1) Simons & Lowe (1995), determined the level of apprehension in accounting majors prior to making curriculum/classroom changes. In their

study, they examined the level of communication apprehension in accounting majors. They found out that accounting majors have higher apprehension toward both written and oral communications than other business majors. 2) Booth et. al. (1999) showed that the way students are taught have impact on their academic performance and hence, their learning in accounting education, and 3) Stivers & Phillips (2009) assert that the professional accreditation agencies are making demands for assessment of student learning. In their paper, they state that accreditation agencies are suggesting that educators should shift their focus from what faculty teaches to what students learn.”. The latter shows the shift of teacher-centeredness paradigm to student-centeredness so that the focus of any curriculum should be the learner and his learning.

Library and Learning Resources: The participants were likewise one in saying that the availability of wide range of reliable, up-to-date and relevant learning resources in the library have also contributed to their topping the board. They then acknowledged that the provision of conducive library for their studies was particularly helpful. The study of Greenwald et al. (1996) supports such claim. They analyzed sixty primary research studies aggregated data at the level of school districts or smaller units and either controlled for socioeconomic characteristics or were longitudinal in design. They found out that a broad range of resources were positively related to student outcomes, with effect sizes large enough to suggest that moderate increases in spending may be associated with significant increases in achievement.

Another article that supports the role of library and learning resources is that of Hanushek (1997) which assessed the effects of school resources on student performance. He found out that the close to 400 studies of student achievement demonstrate that there is not a strong or consistent relationship between student performance and school resources, at least after variations in family inputs are taken into account. He further found out that the said results were in sync with meta-analytic approaches and with other investigations on how school resources affect labor market outcomes. In addition, he stated that simple resource policies hold little hope for improving student outcomes.

School Review Program: The participants recognize that the School Review Program in the University was very helpful. This School Review Program is part of the curriculum, but on top of this is a formal review program organized by the Program Head of Accountancy to address areas where students got low in mock board exams. Feedbacks from previous board exam takers were also considered in planning the review program. Moreover, the participants acknowledged that the program was a good training ground in preparation for the actual board exams.

Additionally, the achievers also cited that their participation to different academic competitions, while still studying was particularly helpful in their board examination as updates or contents in the accountancy field/industry are part of the contest.

Influence of review board mates/review mates/study groups: The participants likewise attribute their success to the contribution of their board mates/review mates/study groups to their success as they have provided other opportunities outside of the formal review for exchange of thoughts and discussions.

Outlook in life: The achievers were notably home buddies which to them greatly contributed to their focus in studies. The increased independence and positive outlook in life, including being prayerful, were confirmed by their parents. By independence, the parents confirmed that their children work on assignments on their own. Additionally, the achievers confirmed of reading their lessons in advance and reads a lot of materials. Even teachers and classmates of the achievers confirm the same.

Analysis

In this study, academic achievement of students such as topping the board examination confirms what Steve Mueller's Iceberg Theory of Success which states that “every famous or extraordinary successful person had to invest a lot of effort and work until this person achieved his goals”. The outcome or the goal in this case is the upper part of the iceberg which is the accomplishment or the achievements, and the lower part of the iceberg, which is the bigger part, represent the efforts put in by the achievers. The journey of the individuals in this study have been presented, which has illustrated their travails and showcased their efforts put in order to attain their goals.

The close association of the success of the topnotch graduates ably confirmed by Mueller is further corroborated by the Walberg's Theory of Educational Productivity as cited by McGrew, which states “Classroom learning is a multiplicative, diminishing-returns function of four essential factors—student ability and motivation, and quality and quantity of instruction—and possibly four supplementary or supportive factors—the social psychological environment of the classroom, education-stimulating conditions in the home and peer group, and exposure to mass media.

Contributory to the topping of the achievers in the BLECPA are internal and external environments. The internal environment and the accompanying factor is that of personal factors such as habits on studies and prayer, and being consistent honor student. The external environment and the accompanying factors are

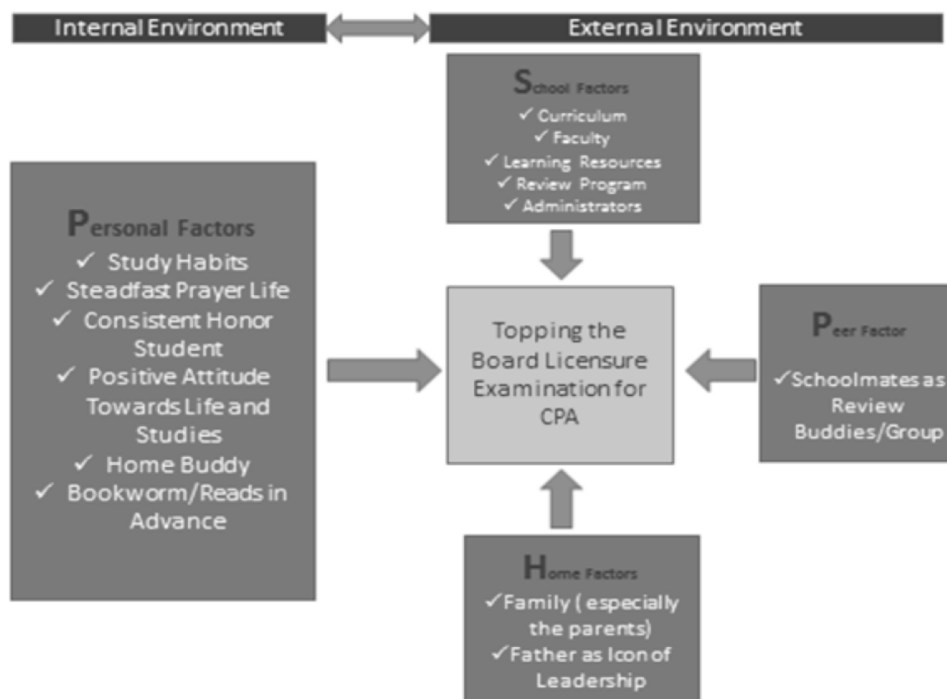
1) school factors like the kind of instruction such as those referring to curriculum, teachers and administrators, resources, review program and the like and 2) peer factor-impact of peers in the preparation in school and prior to actual the board examination especially as review buddies/group and 3) family factors, which includes the parents, with their father as an inspiration and icon of leadership who continuously motivate them. Of these factors, the internal environment within which the achievement permeates is that of the personal factors and contributory to the excellence is the external environment which consists of school factors for most part, followed by home and peer factors. Findings that are consistent with Walberg's Theory of Productivity four factors in classroom learning such as student ability, student motivation, quality of instruction and quantity of instruction are, student ability, student motivation and quality of teachers. Likewise, as to the supplementary or supportive factors: the social psychological environment of the classroom, education-stimulating conditions in the home and peer group, and exposure to mass media, only the latter was not consistent with the results of this paper.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Topping the Board Licensure Examination for Certified

Public Accountant is a result of different complimentary factors. The formula derived from this study is aptly illustrated in the following framework for Accounting Education Achievement which basically is a complement of the internal and external environments of the achievers. It is dubbed as P-SHP Theory of Productivity in Accounting Education. P-SHP refers to Personal Factors, being supported by School factors, Home Factors and Peer Factor. This framework was conceived as the researcher's contribution towards Excellence in Accounting Education. For most part, personal factors such as good study habits, coupled with strong faith in God, being consistent academically, determination and positive outlook in life, represent the internal environment that play a major role in the achievement of the topnotch graduates. Complementing the internal environment is the school, home and peer factors- the external environment. The school's high standard curriculum, qualified faculty, up-to-date learning resources, Structured Review Program and Administration's support form part of school factors that contribute to excellent performance. These school factors are ably supported by home factors-inspiring family, father as icon of leadership, and peer factor-with classmates as review buddies/group.

Figure 1: P-SHP Theory of Productivity in Accounting Education



The need to expand further this study to other non-first placers in the BLECPA can be explored in the light of whether same factors such as those found in this study holds through. Additionally, the need to determine the impact of

each of the identified school factors to the performance of the BLECPA takers can be looked into further.

In the light of the results from this study and the detailed recommendations of the BLECPA achievers, what plans of

action can be taken by Administrators to further enhance the university's performance as well as an in-depth review and evaluation of the BSAC program can be explored by the University and other schools offering such program.

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