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Effect of Ateneo Training on Test Readiness for Admission to College (ATTRAC) Program Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT

Ateneo de Iloilo has conceptualized a 20-day review program entitled ADI-SMCS Training on Test Readiness for Admission to College (ATTRAC). This aimed to prepare students for entrance tests in top schools in the country. It covered 109 Grade 11 Atenean participants who joined ATTRAC. The data collected were statistically analyzed using measures of central tendencies, Shapiro-Wilk test for normality, paired sample t-test, and Pearson r at 0.05 level of significance. Qualitative triangulation was also made. The results showed that there is a significant difference between the overall pretest and posttest scores in the College Admission Test ($p=0.00$), showing progress from a pretest mean score of 78.57 to a posttest mean score of 114.33. Also, moderately positive and significant correlation ($r=0.709$) between the overall pretest and posttest scores was established. It also had high positive and significant correlation between the pretest and the posttest under English Test ($r=0.751$), while moderately positive and significant correlation was found between the pretest and posttest under Mathematics ($r=0.591$) and Reading ($r=0.470$) Tests. The pretest-posttest results of Science Reasoning Test registered a negligible and insignificant correlational value ($r=0.121$). Participants also revealed that time is their usual “enemy” during tests. They unanimously recognized the benefit of review to them, especially in reminding them of the basics, getting them used to different test designs, and practicing time-bound drills. ATTRAC was found to give positive results to SHS reviewers but it can still improve in its offerings, especially in science reasoning and test hacks.

INTRODUCTION

Going to an Ivy school in college is every student’s dream. This is spot-on true in the context of the Grade 12 students of Ateneo de Iloilo-Santa Maria Catholic School (ADI-SMCS) who were set to face a clear and present challenge, their first big step in their career path, the college admission tests.

A school career survey (Lagon, 2016) showed that 92.82% of the Ateneo SHS students plan to take entrance tests in Manila schools early in 2017-2018. Table 1 shows the distribution of the potential test takers. This is supported by the expressed appeal from the different school stakeholders for a type of summer intervention—an alternative to the ones offered in

commercial review centers-to be offered by the school that would assist students in their exam preparations. Consequently, the ADI-SMCS Senior High School (SHS) Unit conceptualized and implemented the cognitive constructivist-inspired Ateneo de Iloilo-SMCS Training on Test Readiness for Admission to College (ATTRAC) Program. Intended to reinforce and enhance students’ preparation for Manila-based admission tests, ATTRAC was carried out last March 28, April 7-8, 10-11, 17-22, 24-29, and May 6, 13, and 20, 2017.

This study was conducted to examine the effect of the ATTRAC Program on SHS students of ADI-SMCS. It purposely meant to measure the success or failure of the initiative, the results of which will determine the program’s termination, improvement, or extension

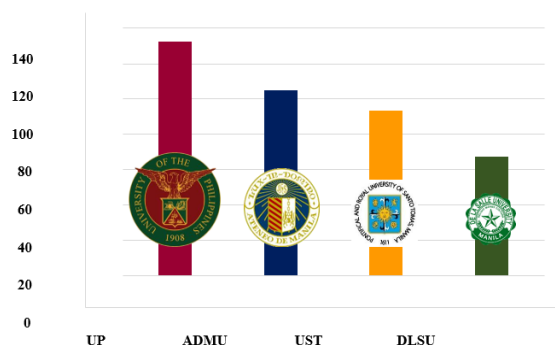


Figure 1: Number of Ateneans who plan to take Admission Test in select Manila Schools. Note that some students opt to take the entrance test in two or more schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Tens of thousands of students take the entrance tests for UP, Ateneo, UST, and La Salle. More often than not, they tend to get failing marks due to lack of test readiness and preparation. There is considerable literature relating to entrance exams in developed countries especially regarding correlation between test performance and their academic preparation and test readiness in high school. The results mostly show a positive correlation between entrance exam scores and their academic basic education performance. Although it has been argued that this may have been inflated because the scores in standardized tests are highly correlated with socioeconomic background

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(Rothstein, 2004).

The results in Chinese universities show strong correlation between their entrance examination and basic education grade point average (Bai, Chi and Qian, 2013). Similar results are found in a university in Ethiopia (Zekaris, Aba-Milki and Mikre, 2015). The results from Turkish universities, on the other hand, show low correlation between academic preparations and their entrance exam test (Agazade, *et al.*, 2014).

Meta-analyses on test preparation for college achievement tests show a modest test score gain of 0.25 standard deviations (Bangert-Drowns, Kulik, & Kulik, 1983). Despite the growth of the test preparation industry (Barnes Reports, 2017), the existing research on the efficacy of test preparation has shown mixed results depending on the type of test preparation activity, population tested, or study design/methodology (Lane, Raymond, & Haladyna, 2015). On average, research shows test preparation has small to moderate positive effects on actual test scores, with average test score gains falling within the margin of error for Irrespective of engaging in test preparation activities, research has found that students who retest tend to increase their score (Appelrouth, Zabrocky, & Moore, 2015).

In this paper, we examine the impact of participating in test preparation prior to retaking the college entrance tests. The present study aims to address the call by Briggs (2009) for additional and more robust research on the efficacy of test preparation programs for college admission tests.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This quasi-experimental study covered 109 Grade 11 Atenean participants who were purposively identified by virtue of their mutual interest (and parents' consent) to join ATTRAC. The data collected were statistically analyzed using measures of central tendencies, mean difference, Shapiro-Wilk test for normality, paired sample t-test, and Pearson *r* at 0.05 level of significance. Focus Group Discussions and journaling were also done to triangulate the intervention.

The students went through a 20-day, 8-week entrance test review sessions in summer of 2017 in the classrooms of ADI-SMCS. 16 select Ateneo teachers, all experts in their respective fields, designed their own review modules following the agreed college admission test, multiple-choice, in-depth-coverage format. The topics covered were generally patterned and appropriated over that of Ateneo de Manila University College Entrance Test (ACET) and University of the Philippines College Admission Test (UPCAT). They were mainly Mathematics, Science, English, and abstract-logical reasoning, with a touch of essay, Filipino, and General Information.

Students were divided into four clusters: two clusters were scheduled in the 4-hour morning session and the other half were scheduled in the 4-hour afternoon session. All participants experienced the same way of proceeding— answering of review items, followed by the

checking, analyzing, and evaluating of the questions and answers— inspired by the 9 basic positions of cognitive development by Perry (1999), and test preparation tips of Briggs (2001), Bord (2008), Britanico (2014), Ganglani (2014).

Using a 20-page, 2-hour standardized College Admission Test instrument, the reviews took the pretest on March 28, 2017, and the posttest on May 20, 2017.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results showed that there is a significant difference between the overall pretest and posttest scores in the College Admission Test ($p=0.00$), showing progress from a pretest mean score of 78.57 to a posttest mean score of 114.33. Also, moderately positive and significant correlation ($r=0.709$) between the overall pretest and posttest scores was established.

On the other hand, it was found out that there are significant differences between the pretest and posttest College Admission Test scores in the following categories: English Test ($p=0.00$), Mathematics Test ($p=0.00$), Reading Test ($p=0.00$), and Science Reasoning Test ($p=0.00$). High positive and significant correlation was found between the pretest and the posttest under English Test ($r=0.751$), while moderately positive and significant correlation was found between the pretest and posttest under Mathematics ($r=0.591$) and Reading ($r=0.470$) Tests. The pretest-posttest results of Science Reasoning Test, on the other hand, registered a negligible and insignificant correlational value ($r=0.121$).

With this, and referring to the increase of the pretest-post-test mean scores as shown in Figure 2, there appeared a positive performance of students in all the four categories.

Further analysis showed that most positive score improvement (mean difference) were seen in the areas

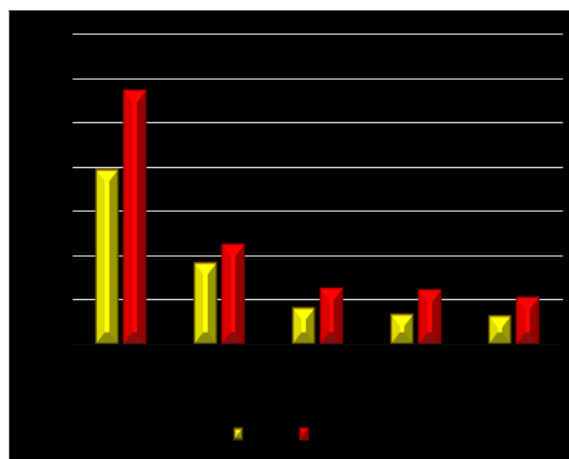


Figure 2: Students' pretest-posttest mean scores.

of prose fiction (12.33), coordinate geometry (9.56), trigonometry (9.22), strategy (9.06), punctuation (8.67), basic grammar and usage (8.45), and data representation (8.23). Minimal improvement based on the mean difference, however, was observed in the areas of sentence structure

(2.55), geometry (3.12), conflicting viewpoints (4.25), and humanities (3.47). The area on research summaries (0.45) had almost no improvement at all.

Participants' journals and FGDs also revealed that time is their usual "enemy." This was confirmed by the reviewers themselves who had to squeeze out items in the two-hour session given to them per cluster in a day. Another concern is the conduciveness of the venue. Most of the sessions were done in the school old site with rooms that are relatively less ventilated and smaller than those in the new site. They, however, unanimously recognized the benefit of review to them, especially in reminding them of the basics, getting them used to different test designs, and practicing time-bound drills.

The ATTRAC Program result corroborated with the studies of Gurung and Bord (2007) and Hackathorn *et al* (2012). Both also showed that cognitive-constructivist kind of reviews foster the students' feelings of being "confident" and "prepared" for the task at hand and it being "helpful" in getting higher scores in the process. Apparently, this finding has been further predicated upon the mushrooming of review centers all over the country.

CONCLUSION

ATTRAC is an effective program in preparing SHS students for college admission. However, it needs more concrete validation—the ultimate measure of success—in the actual college entrance test results that are set to be release in December, 2017. Nonetheless, the positive effect of ATTRAC 2017 warrants the extension and offering of the program this summer of 2018. The data and experience it gathered can serve as part of the school's Counseling Program database in guiding students in their career decision-making process. It may also be used as one of the main references of the faculty and administrators for curriculum planning and instructional design. However, further improvement is recommended as to the following review topic areas: sentence structure, geometry, humanities, and conflicting viewpoints, with more stress on doing research summaries. A more ventilated venue and the appropriation of time per review topic must also be further contextualized. This kind of admission test review may also be contextualized and be adopted by other Senior High Schools in the country.

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