

Beyond Subject Teaching: Experiences of Novice Teachers as First Time Class Advisers

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the experiences of novice teachers assigned as class advisers beyond their subject teaching roles in selected public and private schools in Bukidnon, Philippines. Specifically, it examined the reasons for their assignment to advisory classes, the challenges they encountered in fulfilling this role, the strategies they used to cope with these challenges, and the advice they could offer to other novice teachers. The study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach to capture the lived experiences and personal meanings that novice teacher-advisers attach to their advisory work. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with novice teachers serving as class advisers, and the transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring themes across participants' narratives. Findings revealed that novice teachers were primarily assigned as class advisers due to institutional needs such as teacher shortages, workload distribution, and administrative decisions, often with limited consideration of their readiness or prior advisory experience. Participants reported multiple challenges, including balancing teaching and advisory responsibilities, managing diverse student behaviors, handling sensitive learner concerns, complying with documentation and reporting requirements, and sustaining communication with parents and school administrators. To cope with these demands, novice teachers sought guidance from more experienced colleagues, improved their organization and time management, built positive relationships with students, used digital tools for record-keeping and communication, and engaged in reflective practice, consistent with coping patterns noted in related studies on novice teachers. The study concludes that while class advisership poses significant difficulties for novice teachers, it also serves as a meaningful avenue for professional growth when institutional support, mentoring, and opportunities for reflection are present. The insights generated may inform school leaders and policymakers in designing more responsive induction programs, workload arrangements, and support mechanisms for novice teacher-advisers.

Keywords: novice teachers, class advisership, lived experiences, challenges, coping strategies, professional development

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a complex profession that extends beyond subject delivery, as teachers are expected to perform instructional, administrative, and advisory roles that demand pedagogical competence, emotional resilience, and adaptability. In the Philippine context, they often act as mentors, counselors, and coordinators who respond to learners' academic, social, and personal needs while complying with institutional policies and accountability requirements. Within this broad scope of responsibilities, the role of the class adviser has become a critical yet less examined dimension of teachers' work, particularly in basic education where advisers serve as the primary link among students, parents, and the school. Advisory responsibilities such as managing class records, monitoring attendance, preparing reports, organizing activities, and providing continuous guidance substantially increase teachers' workload and emotional demands, especially during peak periods like reporting and end-of-year requirements, indicating that advisership is a major component of teachers' roles rather than a minor add-on. For novice teachers who are still adjusting to classroom realities and constructing their professional identities,

being assigned as class advisers intensifies these pressures and raises concerns about readiness, support, and sustainability in the profession.

Recent studies in the Philippine and Southeast Asian context show that beginning teachers already struggle with classroom management, instructional planning, and institutional expectations, yet must also cope with role overload and ambiguity as they juggle instructional, administrative, and pastoral responsibilities. Phenomenological research has documented how neophyte teachers experience multiple pressures but draw on peer support, reflective practice, and adaptive strategies to cope (Alay, 2024; Viterbo et al., 2025), while work on teacher-advisers' workload demonstrates how overlapping demands and limited preparation can lead to stress and emotional strain (Department of Education, 2019; Lague, 2025). However, advisory duties are often discussed only as part of general workload, leaving a gap in understanding how novice teachers specifically experience and navigate class advisership and how this dual role shapes their challenges, coping mechanisms, and professional growth. Guided by this gap, the present study aims to examine the experiences of novice teachers assigned as class advisers, focusing on the reasons for their assignment, the challenges they encounter, the strategies they use to cope, and the advice they can extend to other novice teachers. Anchored in a qualitative phenomenological approach, the investigation is conducted in selected public and private schools in Bukidnon, Philippines, during the school year 2025–2026, to generate localized, contextualized findings that can inform induction programs, mentoring systems, and support structures for novice teacher-advisers.

Objectives of the study

This study aims to explore the experiences of novice teachers assigned as class advisers beyond their subject teaching roles. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the reasons why you were assigned as a class adviser?
2. What are the challenges you faced as a novice teacher assigned an advisory class?
3. How did you cope with these challenges?
4. What can you advise other novice teachers about being assigned an advisory class?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach, as it sought to explore and describe the lived experiences of novice teachers who had been assigned as class advisers beyond their subject teaching roles. Phenomenology was deemed appropriate because the focus of the inquiry was on understanding how these teachers make sense of their advisory responsibilities, the challenges they encounter, the ways they cope, and the meanings they attach to their experiences in the context of their early years in the profession, rather than on measuring variables or testing hypotheses. By foregrounding the participants' own narratives and perspectives, the study aimed to capture the essence of being a novice teacher-adviser in a natural school setting, staying true to the central concern of phenomenological research, which is to describe and interpret the lived world of individuals as they experience it.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were novice teachers who had been assigned as class advisers in selected public and private schools in Bukidnon. For the purpose of this research, novice teachers were defined as those who were newly hired or within the first three years of their teaching career at the elementary or secondary level and who had been given an advisory class as part of their official load. Purposive sampling was used to identify and select participants who could provide rich and relevant information about the phenomenon under investigation, consistent with the nature of phenomenological research.

The researcher identify teachers who met the inclusion criteria: (1) currently employed in a public or private school in Bukidnon, (2) officially designated as class advisers during the school year of the study, and (3) willing to share their experiences through an in-depth interview. Approximately eight to fifteen participants were targeted to allow for depth of exploration while remaining manageable for detailed qualitative analysis, with the final number determined by the point at which data saturation was observed, that is, when no substantially new themes were emerging from additional interviews.

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide developed from the study’s research questions, focusing on assignment as class adviser, challenges, coping strategies, and advice for other novice teachers. The guide included open-ended questions and follow-up prompts to elicit detailed responses and was used in both individual face-to-face interviews and a follow-up focus group discussion to further validate emerging insights. To ensure clarity and relevance, the instrument was reviewed by experts in qualitative research and teacher education, and a pilot interview was conducted with a non-participant to refine the questions. The researcher acknowledges her role as the primary instrument in data collection and analysis. To minimize bias, efforts were made to bracket personal assumptions and remain open to participants’ perspectives. Reflective notes were maintained throughout the study to ensure that interpretations were grounded in the participants’ lived experiences.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathering procedure began with the purposive selection of 12 novice teachers assigned as class advisers in selected public and private schools in Bukidnon who met the inclusion criteria. The researcher personally invited these participants, explained the purpose and procedures of the study, and secured their informed consent prior to the interviews. Interviews were scheduled at convenient times and conducted in quiet locations, following a conversational yet focused approach using a semi-structured interview guide. Each session lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour, was audio-recorded with consent, and supplemented with brief field notes to capture relevant observations. To enhance credibility, participants were consulted after transcription to verify the accuracy of their responses. The recordings were transcribed verbatim and carefully reviewed to ensure the accuracy and trustworthiness of the data.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis aligned with qualitative phenomenological research to identify patterns of meaning in the participants’ experiences as novice teacher-advisers. The researcher familiarized herself with the data through repeated reading of the transcripts, after which significant statements were coded based on the study’s focus on assignment, challenges, coping strategies, and advice. These codes were refined and grouped into categories, which were then organized into themes and subthemes reflecting key dimensions such as workload, emotional demands, support systems, and professional growth. The analysis followed the framework of Braun and Clarke (2006), with constant movement between data, codes, and themes to ensure that interpretations remained grounded in the participants’ narratives.

To ensure rigor and trustworthiness, member checking was conducted to validate participants’ responses and interpretations. Peer debriefing was used to minimize bias and enhance consistency, while an audit trail documented the analytical process for transparency. Thick description was also employed to support the transferability of the findings.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Reasons for Assignment as Class Adviser

Emerging Theme	Responses	Participants
Administrative Need and Teacher Shortage	Assigned due to resignation, transfer, or urgent need	P3, P4, P9

Workload Availability	Distribution and	Assigned due to lighter load or being newly hired	P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P11, P12
Institutional Decision-Making		Assignment decided by administration	P1, P2, P5
Perceived Suitability of Young Teachers		Chosen due to relatability and energy	P1, P2
Professional Growth Opportunity		Volunteered or accepted role for experience	P7, P10

Assignment of Advisership Driven by Institutional Needs and Professional Growth Opportunities

The findings show that novice teachers are commonly assigned as class advisers due to administrative needs, staffing shortages, and workload distribution within the school. Most participants were selected because they were newly hired, had lighter teaching loads, or were more available than senior teachers who already handled multiple responsibilities. In several cases, the assignment resulted from unexpected circumstances such as the resignation or transfer of previous advisers, requiring immediate replacement to ensure continuity in student supervision. Additionally, school administrators considered perceived suitability, particularly assigning younger teachers whom they believed could better relate to students' experiences and behavior. Despite these considerations, many participants reported that the decision was largely administrative, with limited opportunity for personal choice.

These patterns indicate that advisership among novice teachers is primarily institution-driven, reflecting how schools prioritize operational needs over teacher readiness. While this may create initial challenges in adjustment, it also exposes novice teachers to responsibilities that accelerate their professional growth, particularly in leadership, classroom management, and student guidance. This suggests that advisership functions both as a structural necessity in schools and as a formative experience for early-career teachers.

This finding is supported by recent international evidence emphasizing the expanding roles of teachers in contemporary education systems. The OECD (2020) reports that novice teachers are frequently assigned multiple responsibilities early in their careers due to institutional demands, which contributes to both increased workload and professional learning. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) highlights that teachers are increasingly expected to perform roles beyond instruction, reinforcing the need for structured support systems for beginning teachers.

Table 2. Challenges Faced by Novice Teacher-Advisers

Emerging Theme	Responses	Participants
Workload and Role Overload	Difficulty balancing teaching and advisory roles	P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P12
Classroom Management and Discipline	Difficulty handling behavior and authority	P1, P3, P7, P9, P11
Handling Student Issues	Managing emotional and sensitive concerns	P2, P3, P7, P10
Administrative Tasks and Documentation	Difficulty with reports and forms	P1, P2, P5, P6, P8, P11
Communication with Parents	Lack of confidence in communication	P1, P2, P8, P12
Lack of Experience and Preparation	Feeling unprepared	P3, P5, P6

Complex Demands of Advisership: Instructional, Administrative, and Emotional Challenges

The findings reveal that novice teachers encounter multiple and interconnected challenges when assigned as class advisers, highlighting the complexity of the role. Many participants reported difficulty balancing teaching responsibilities with advisory duties, resulting in workload overload and stress. In addition to lesson preparation and classroom instruction, they were required to monitor attendance, manage student behavior, and complete administrative reports, which significantly increased their responsibilities. Classroom management also emerged as a major concern, particularly in establishing authority and handling diverse student behaviors. As relatively new teachers, some participants found it difficult to maintain professional boundaries while building positive relationships with students.

Another critical challenge involves handling sensitive student concerns. Participants described situations involving emotional, social, and personal issues that required maturity, discretion, and effective communication. These responsibilities often made them feel unprepared, especially since such scenarios were not extensively addressed during their pre-service training. Administrative tasks further intensified these challenges, as many participants were unfamiliar with documentation processes and reporting requirements. Communication with parents also posed difficulties, particularly when addressing academic or behavioral concerns in a professional and confident manner.

These findings suggest that advisership requires a wide range of competencies beyond instructional skills, including emotional intelligence, communication abilities, and administrative competence. The challenges experienced by novice teachers also point to a gap between teacher preparation and the realities of school practice. This is supported by Linda Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), who emphasize that teachers often face complex, multifaceted roles that extend beyond classroom instruction and require strong institutional support. Likewise, UNESCO (2021) reports that teachers globally experience increased workload and emotional demands, particularly in managing student well-being and administrative responsibilities. In the Philippine context, Llaca and Mediodia (2025) found that teachers’ work–life balance and well-being are strongly affected by school management quality, with many teachers still reporting workload pressures and challenges in managing multiple responsibilities.

Table 3. Coping Strategies of Novice Teacher-Advisers

Emerging Theme	Responses	Participants
Mentorship and Guidance	Seeking advice from experienced teachers	P1, P3, P5, P6, P8, P9, P10
Organization and Time Management	Creating systems and routines	P2, P5, P8, P12
Building Relationships with Students	Establishing trust and communication	P4, P6, P7, P9
Use of Technology and Innovation	Using digital tools to manage tasks	P4
Reflection and Continuous Learning	Learning through experience	P3, P6, P7, P10

Adaptive Coping through Mentorship, Organization, and Reflective Practice

To cope with the challenges of advisership, novice teachers employed various adaptive strategies centered on support, organization, and continuous learning. A common approach among participants was seeking guidance from experienced teachers, which helped them navigate unfamiliar situations and develop effective practices. Observing how seasoned educators handled classroom management and advisory responsibilities provided valuable insights that could be applied in their own teaching contexts.

Organization and time management also played a crucial role in coping. Participants developed structured routines, checklists, and record-keeping systems that enabled them to manage their responsibilities more efficiently. These strategies helped reduce stress and allowed them to balance teaching and advisory tasks more

effectively. Building positive relationships with students was another important coping mechanism, as it improved communication, classroom management, and overall classroom climate.

Some participants also utilized technology to streamline administrative tasks, such as using digital tools for tracking student progress and organizing records. In addition, reflection and continuous learning were essential in helping teachers improve over time. By evaluating their experiences and learning from challenges, they gradually developed confidence and competence in their roles.

These findings indicate that coping is largely experience-based and support-driven, emphasizing the importance of mentorship, collaboration, and reflective practice in teacher development. This aligns with the OECD (2020), which highlights that peer collaboration and mentoring significantly enhance teacher effectiveness, particularly among novice educators. Similarly, UNESCO (2023) underscores the importance of continuous professional learning and reflective practice in helping teachers adapt to complex and evolving roles.

Table 4. Advice for Novice Teacher-Advisers

Emerging Theme	Responses	Participants
Balance Approachability and Authority	Maintain discipline while being supportive	P1, P7, P9
Organization and Time Management	Develop systems and routines	P2, P5, P12
Seeking Guidance and Continuous Learning	Learn from experienced teachers	P3, P7, P8
Resilience and Growth Mindset	Accept challenges and improve	P6, P10
Building Relationships and Communication	Establish trust and professionalism	P4

Guided and Reflective Advisership for Professional Growth

The advice shared by participants highlights the importance of adopting a balanced, reflective, and growth-oriented approach to advisership. Teachers emphasized maintaining a balance between being approachable and authoritative, ensuring that students feel supported while still respecting classroom rules and expectations. Organization and time management were also identified as essential, as structured systems help teachers manage their responsibilities more efficiently.

Participants further emphasized the importance of seeking guidance and continuously learning from others. Novice teachers are encouraged to ask questions, observe experienced colleagues, and remain open to improvement. Developing resilience was also highlighted as a key factor, particularly in dealing with challenges and criticism. Rather than becoming discouraged, teachers are encouraged to view difficulties as opportunities for growth and professional development.

Building strong relationships with students and maintaining professionalism were also identified as essential components of effective advisership. Establishing trust and open communication allows teachers to guide students more effectively and foster a positive classroom environment. These insights suggest that successful advisership depends not only on technical skills but also on mindset, adaptability, and interpersonal competence. This is consistent with recent work on teacher resilience, which shows that sustaining effectiveness over time depends on teachers' ability to adapt to contextual challenges with the support of personal and institutional resources (e.g., McLennan, 2023; Smith et al., 2025). Furthermore, the OECD (2020) highlights that continuous learning, collaboration, and professional support are key factors in long-term teacher success.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. On the reasons for assignment as class adviser, novice teachers are assigned primarily due to institutional needs, such as teacher shortages, workload distribution, and administrative decisions. In most cases, the assignment is not based on teacher readiness but on availability and perceived suitability. However, advisership also provides an opportunity for professional growth, allowing novice teachers to develop leadership, classroom management, and student guidance skills early in their careers.
2. On the challenges faced by novice teacher-advisers, the role presents multiple and complex demands, including balancing teaching and advisory responsibilities, managing student behavior, handling sensitive student concerns, completing administrative tasks, and communicating with parents. These challenges indicate that advisership requires competencies beyond instructional skills and reveal a gap between pre-service training and actual school responsibilities.
3. On how novice teachers cope with these challenges, they employ adaptive and experience-based strategies, such as seeking guidance from experienced teachers, improving organization and time management, building positive relationships with students, utilizing technology, and engaging in reflection and continuous learning. These strategies help them gradually develop confidence and effectiveness in their roles.
4. On the advice of novice teachers to others, they recommend adopting a balanced and growth-oriented approach to advisership. This includes maintaining authority while being approachable, staying organized, seeking support from colleagues, developing resilience, and building strong relationships with students. These insights highlight that successful advisership depends not only on skills but also on mindset, adaptability, and continuous learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. School administrators should provide structured support systems for novice teachers assigned as class advisers. This includes proper orientation, clear guidelines, and continuous supervision to help them adjust to their roles effectively.
2. Educational institutions should strengthen professional development programs that focus on classroom management, communication skills, handling student concerns, and administrative responsibilities to better prepare teachers for advisership.
3. Schools should establish mentoring and collaborative support systems, where novice teachers can seek guidance from experienced teachers. Regular collaboration can help improve their confidence and performance.
4. Novice teachers are encouraged to develop effective personal strategies, such as improving organization and time management, using technology for administrative tasks, and practicing reflective learning to enhance their professional growth.
5. Future researchers may conduct further studies on the long-term experiences of class advisers and explore strategies or interventions that can better support novice teachers in advisory roles.

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