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THE BEST PRACTICES OF TEACHER-ADVISERS OF AWARD-WINNING SCHOOL PAPERS IN THE PHILIPPINE NATIONAL COMPETITIONS: AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

This study utilized Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the best practices of teacher-advisers of award-winning school papers in the Philippine National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) within the Davao Region. It aimed to understand how these advisers interpret their experiences and implement these practices. Seven advisers participated in in-depth interviews and shared their insights on achieving excellence in school paper competitions. Through thematic analysis, six superordinate themes emerged: Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers enhanced student staff's skills through structured training; the school paper advisers promoted teamwork, peer learning, and collaboration for effective journalism; the school paper advisers mentored student staff through tailored strategies, feedback, and reflection; the school paper advisers incorporated digital tools to stay updated with trends in the school publication; the school paper advisers focused on grammar and writing quality to enhance publication standards; and the school paper advisers promoted advocacy-driven reporting in school publications.

KEYWORDS: *Education, applied linguistics, interpretative phenomenological analysis, best practices, teacher-advisers, National Schools Press Conference (NSPC), Davao Region, Philippines*

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The school paper advisers functioned as mentors, guides, and facilitators for student journalists (Advincula & Adtoon, 2024). Their management style shapes the campus paper's outcomes by overseeing and training student writers to produce balanced news. They teach proper writing techniques, guide editorial staff, and ensure the publication's quality and impact (Cainong 2024). To further strengthen campus journalism in honing students' skills, the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) is established (Goh, 2014), and succeeding in this competition is the result of school paper advisers' preparation to ready student journalists for the task (Roxas & Marasigan, 2019). However, many secondary public school advisers lack the skills, resulting in subpar campus journalism which relates to their background characteristics, such as financial aspects (Cubillas & Cubillas, 2021), number of years, availability of resources (Laroya & Limjuco, 2016), (Hinay, 2019) insufficient education in journalism, and the limited support of the school in organizing and offering training opportunities.

In the United States, Sparling (2011) reported high levels of emotional exhaustion and burnout among high school journalism advisers in her national survey. The study identified job dissatisfaction and gender as significant predictors of this burnout. Moreover, Sinha and Basu (2020) highlight a pressing issue within journalism education in India wherein the government's proposed program objectives do not align with the allocated budget, resulting in shortages of vital materials and training opportunities for both teachers and students.

In the Philippines, encouraging the sharing of best practices in school paper management and journalist training can be achieved through mentorship sessions involving both seasoned and new School Paper Advisers (Zita et al, 2019). However, as revealed by Nilooban (2019) and Opiano et al (2017), school paper advisers often encounter significant management hurdles related to staffing, planning, directing, organizing, reporting, coordinating, and budgeting for the school paper. In consonance, Valeza et al (2021) stated that as of now, the schools continue to pose challenges to press freedom due to issues such as inadequate funding, insufficient provisions for editorial independence, and concerns regarding the school's authority to discipline students.

By exploring the experiences and practices of national awardees in school papers through interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), this research offers valuable insights into effective teaching strategies and approaches employed by successful school paper advisers, enhancing the quality of journalism education, informing teacher training programs, and promoting ethical journalism practices among students. Furthermore, it serves as a source of inspiration and recognition for educators and

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students alike, highlighting the dedication and innovation demonstrated by national awardees in this field.

With the issues in school paper advising, some scholars delved into them. According to Cervantes (2017), campus journalism is difficult for school paper advisers and student journalists because schools lack the funds to support their participation in trainings, workshops, seminars, and forums. Meanwhile, Patrimonio & Machutes (2023) highlighted the challenges faced by student publication, which are associated with content, coaching and assessment scheduling, and resource availability.

From the issues above on school paper advising from a global to local scale, I was eager to undertake this study, which involved analyzing the best practices of teacher-advisers of award-winning school papers in Philippine national competitions using an interpretative phenomenological approach. Gaining insights from the advisers who have successfully guided their school papers and student journalists to victory in various competitions can provide valuable knowledge and inspiration. It can help other educators enhance their teaching methodologies, build confidence, establish rewarding mentorship relationships, expand networking opportunities, contribute to professional development, and improve the quality of campus journalism programs. There are qualitative studies conducted and published about campus journalism, but very few readings about school papering studies in the Philippines, especially in the local context; hence, there is a need and urgency to conduct the study.

Moreover, the results of this study will be disseminated in 2024 through local and international research forums or conferences. In addition, the findings will be published in a refereed journal, and a copy of the study was provided in the University of the Immaculate Conception library.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis study was to explore the lived experiences of teacher-advisers involved in award-winning school papers in Philippine national competitions. The study aimed to investigate the best practices employed by these teacher-advisers, their experiences in mentoring relationships with the student staff concerning language abilities, the impact of these relationships on the staff's success in competitions, and how teacher-advisers perceive and understand their experiences in implementing effective best practices.

Research Questions

1. What are the best practices of teacher-advisers of award-winning school papers in the Philippine national competitions?
2. How do these advisers describe their experiences on mentoring relationships with students' staff on their language abilities?
3. How do these relationships shape the staff's winning endeavors?
4. How do these teacher-advisers make sense of their experiences in living out their best practices?

Theoretical Lens

This qualitative research is grounded in Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), as defined by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), to delve into the practices and leadership approaches of award-winning school paper advisers. IPA focuses on understanding individuals' subjective experiences and their interpretations of phenomena, providing deep insights into the lived experiences and viewpoints of these advisers. Through in-depth interviews, the research elucidates the meanings, motivations, and challenges related to excelling in school press conferences, highlighting the factors that contribute to success in campus journalism.

Additionally, the study incorporates Transformational Leadership Theory by Bass and Riggio (2006) and Constructivist Learning Theory by Piaget (1971). Transformational Leadership Theory examines leadership practices that inspire and motivate teams toward common goals, allowing the research to explore how award-winning advisers guide and influence their student journalists. Constructivist Learning Theory supports the notion that knowledge and skills in journalism are actively constructed by students through experiences and reflection. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive framework to understand how teacher-adviser practices foster meaningful learning experiences and contribute to the development and success of student journalists in campus paper competitions.

CHAPTER 2
METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative method based on a phenomenological approach. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is essentially an exploratory process anchored in specific methodological traditions to understand issues of the social or human world. This research took on multiple methodologies-applying both narrative inquiry and phenomenological inquiry-based regarding capturing individuals' experiences and interpretations of richly complex research objectives.

In this qualitative research study, I utilized the interpretive phenomenological analysis. Interpretive phenomenological analysis is the combination of interpretation and description to investigate lived experiences. The use of this approach recognizes that all phenomena are interpreted, and that the interpretation of these experiences involves both description of the phenomena as well as interpretation of their meanings. Interpretive phenomenology aims at exploring the basic structures of consciousness as humans. However, van Manen (2003) stated that this research does so by actually focusing on subjective meaning as well as meaning which people ascribe to their experiences. In this methodology, it states that interpretation and description go hand-in-hand in an attempt to encapsulate lived experience.

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Research Participants

For the participants of this study, I identified seven school paper advisers who have received awards and recognition at the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC) at least twice. The participants were selected from a region-wide pool, ensuring a diverse representation. These educators are language teachers at elementary and secondary levels, teaching either English or Filipino subjects, and have a minimum of five years of experience as school paper advisers.

I used purposive sampling in the selection of my participants. Purposive sampling is appropriate in this study because it will effectively target participant groups who have experiences and information that are pertinent to the research objectives. As Patton (2002) ascertains, purposive sampling enables the researcher to choose participants based on specific criteria in such a way that the sample would comprise individuals who are deemed to offer rich and intensive data regarding the phenomenon under investigation.

Furthermore, according to Clark (2010), a sample size of 4-10 is adequate for professional doctorates. I adopted a sample size that would generate considerable data to conduct an adequate study considering that too much data poses significant challenges.

Data Analysis

A thorough examination using IPA gave insights into the experiences and practices of school paper advisers whose students and schools' publications win competitions at the national level. The analysis of the qualitative data from the IPA provided a lead into motivations, challenges, and successful strategies of the teacher adviser, thus giving an insight into the process of mentorship and students' success.

As a researcher, I ensured organized and step-by-step analysis of the interview transcripts, observation notes, audio recordings, and any other textual material as a means to follow research procedure and gain better understanding of the phenomena under research. The IPA approach to data analysis requires several stages by Noon (2018) in the following order: reading and note taking, noting emergent themes, making connections between emergent themes, creating a table of themes, then proceeding to the next case, and then finalizing the table of themes prior to writing up the research.

CHAPTER 3
RESULTS

Table 1
Profile of the Participants

Code	Gender	Age	Rank	Subject Taught	Years as School Paper Adviser	No. of National Awards and Year/s Recognized
Adviser 1	Female	49	School Principal II	English and Filipino	19	2 – 2016, 2017
Adviser 2	Female	36	Teacher I	SPJ English	6	2 – 2019, 2020
Adviser 3	Male	33	Teacher I	SPJ Filipino	6	2 – 2020, 2023
Adviser 4	Female	40	Master Teacher I	English	12	2 – 2018, 2019
Adviser 5	Male	30	Teacher I	SPJ Filipino	9	3 – 2019, 2023, 2024
Adviser 6	Female	44	Master Teacher III	English	17	3 – 2018, 2019, 2020
Adviser 7	Male	33	Teacher I	SPJ Filipino	6	2 – 2020, 2023

Report of Participant Findings

Adviser 1. Adviser 1 provided insights into winning school papers in the Philippine national competitions. She highlighted several successful approaches such as strengthening student skills through consistent and specialized training programs, promoting teamwork and peer learning for effective journalism, adopting tailored mentorship strategies to build student confidence and success, enhancing writing quality by focusing on grammar and structured feedback, maximizing student success by aligning strengths with appropriate competitions, and encouraging reflection, feedback, and learning from experiences to achieve national recognition.

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Adviser 1: Personal Experiential Themes

- Strengthen student skills through consistent and specialized training programs
- Promote teamwork and peer learning for effective journalism
- Adopt tailored mentorship strategies to build student confidence and success
- Enhance writing quality by focusing on grammar and structured feedback
- Maximize student success by aligning strengths with appropriate competitions
- Encourage reflection, feedback, and learning from experiences to achieve national recognition

Adviser 2. Adviser 2 gave inputs into winning school papers in the Philippine national competitions. She noted several practices such as establishing clear, structured training to strengthen the efficiency of school paper production, embracing digital tools and staying abreast of current trends to develop quality publication, using writing that constantly seeks to resolve grammatical challenges, creating a culture of peer learning and improvement in both writing and editing, instilling discipline and a character for long-term success journalism, and practicing the culture of resilience and improvement through adaptability and reflection.

Adviser 2: Personal Experiential Themes

- Establish clear, structured processes to enhance the effectiveness of school paper production
- Incorporate digital tools and stay updated with trends to improve publication quality
- Enhance writing by consistently addressing grammar and structure challenges
- Foster a culture of peer learning and collaborative improvement in writing and editing
- Instill discipline and character development for long-term success in journalism and beyond
- Encourage resilience and continuous improvement through adaptability and reflection.

Adviser 3. Adviser 3 specified insights into winning school papers in the Philippine national competitions. She highlighted several successful approaches such as, enhancing student performance through structured, rigorous training and early introduction to journalism standards, leveraging modern technology while balancing traditional journalism practices with current trends, offering comprehensive mentorship, combining moral and practical support with clear guidance, encouraging collaboration through open discussions, peer feedback, and co-teacher support, instilling discipline and values to ensure long-term success and effective guidance, addressing challenges in writing, time management, and performance through feedback and co-teacher collaboration, and encouraging continuous learning and professional growth through effective mentorship and motivation.

Adviser 3: Personal Experiential Themes

- Enhancing student performance through structured, rigorous training and early introduction to journalism standards
- Leverage modern technology while balancing traditional journalism practices with current trends
- Offer comprehensive mentorship, combining moral and practical support with clear guidance
- Encourage collaboration through open discussions, peer feedback, and co-teacher support
- Instill discipline and values to ensure long-term success and effective guidance

Adviser 4. Adviser 4 shared best practices to be recognized in the NSPC: advocacy-driven reporting promoting, skill development guided by expertise-drive training and role-based assignments, embracing challenges as opportunities for growth through openness to feedback and constructive problem-solving, motivating student staff through consistent practice, and strengthening skills through targeted exercises.

Adviser 4: Personal Experiential Themes

- Promote advocacy-driven reporting
- Guide skill development with expert-driven training and role-based assignments
- Embrace challenges as opportunities for growth by being open to feedback
- Motivate student staff through consistent practice
- Strengthen skills through targeted exercises

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Adviser 5. To win in the national school paper competition Adviser 5 observed the following best practices: benchmarking the practices of successful school papers from top regions to ensure continuous improvement and competitiveness in the school paper, collaborating with peers and advisers on their best practices for continuous growth and development, implementing structured, tailored training programs to enhance student skills and early preparation, motivate and build Student confidence through recognition and support, ensuring editorial integrity by maintaining balance, and fostering clear and responsible communication skills.

Adviser 5: Personal Experiential Themes

- Benchmark the practices of successful school papers from top regions to ensure continuous improvement and competitiveness in the school paper
- Collaborate with peers and advisers on their best practices for continuous growth and development
- Implement structured, tailored training programs to enhance student skills and early preparation
- Motivate and build student confidence through recognition and support
- Ensure editorial integrity by maintaining balance
- Foster clear and responsible communication skills

Adviser 6. Promoting advocacy-driven content with proactive reporting, conducting training for skill development, utilizing resources for school paper development, fostering a collaborative and supportive team environment, and encouraging continuous learning and growth through reflection and feedback are some of the best practices of adviser 6 toward receiving national recognition.

Adviser 6: Personal Experiential Themes

- Promote advocacy-driven content with proactive reporting
- Conduct training for skill development
- Utilize resources for school paper development
- Foster a collaborative and supportive team environment
- Encouraging continuous learning and growth through reflection and feedback

Adviser 7. To be awarded at the national level for the school paper category, Adviser 7 observed the following practices: promoting student-driven innovation for school paper management, adapting to trends in school paper management, fostering grammar mastery and foundational skills, creating a supportive and collaborative environment for team development, and leveraging personal and professional growth through resilient adaptation and mentorship.

Adviser 7: Personal Experiential Themes

- Promote student-driven innovation for school paper management
- Adapt to trends in school paper management
- Foster grammar mastery and foundational skills
- Create a supportive and collaborative environment for team development
- Leverage personal and professional growth through resilient adaptation and mentorship

Report of All Participant Findings

Upon completion of thematic analysis and interpretation of results, six super-ordinate themes emerged. These super-ordinate themes can be linked to the research questions of the study and can be connected to the literature about the best practices of teacher-advisers of award-winning school papers in the Philippine national competitions.

Super-ordinate Themes

1. Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers enhance student staff's skills through structured training.
2. Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers promote teamwork, peer learning, and collaboration for effective journalism.
3. Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers mentor student staff through tailored strategies, feedback, and reflection.
4. Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers incorporate digital tools to stay updated with trends in the school publication.
5. Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers focus on grammar and writing quality to enhance publication standards.

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6. Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers promote advocacy-driven reporting in school publications.

CHAPTER 4
DISCUSSION

Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers enhance student staff's skills through structured training. The results of this study prove that conducting structured training enhances students' skills. School paper advisers emphasized the importance of structured training in developing their students' journalistic capabilities, where they design and implement targeted training sessions focusing on essential skills like writing, editing, photography, and layout design. Advisers' practices of providing frequent critiques and guidance, implementing enhancement programs, intense practice sessions, and early exposure to professional journalism standards relate to each other as they form a cohesive, structured training framework. This comprehensive structure ensures that students receive consistent feedback, rigorous practice, and targeted skill development. This finding is parallel to the assertion of Hawthorne (2021) that if the program is structured and strategically designed, its chances of success are significantly higher.

Advisers 1 and 2 employed personalized training to enhance students learning. They provide frequent critiques and guidance to address specific writing challenges. They deliver tailored feedback as necessary. Romero (2018) asserted that editors and advisers should carefully review the articles written by campus journalists. They might also want to talk directly with the writers whenever they see something that needs improvement. As supported by Muyengwa & Bukaliya (2016), the key role of editors and advisers is to provide detailed feedback and tutoring on articles written by campus journalists. This thorough feedback serves as a valuable learning experience for the journalists.

Advisers 3, 5, and 6 reinforce the value of structured training by implementing enhancement programs, intense practice sessions, and early exposure to professional journalism standards. This supported Roxas and Marasigan's (2019) result that continuous training and skill improvement for student journalists should be ensured through year-round activities. Mangompit (2022) revealed that regular training for student journalists is essential for enhancing their skills and creating high-quality school publications.

Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers promote teamwork, peer learning, and collaboration for effective journalism. School paper advisers promote teamwork, peer learning, and collaboration to optimize school paper production and journalistic excellence. Adviser 1, Adviser 2, and Adviser 7 encourage teamwork and peer learning as essential components of journalistic success. This result is congruent with the findings of Cagatan and Quirap (2024) that collaborative learning among students fosters learning and socializing. Teachers are encouraged to adopt a sense of shared purpose, positive attitude, and motivation among students.

Adviser 3 and Adviser 5 both highlight the importance of collaboration not only among students but also with co-teachers and peers outside the immediate team. This finding is related to the revelations of Zita et al. (2019) that fostering the sharing of best practices in school paper management and journalist training can be achieved through cooperating with seasoned and new School Paper Advisers (SPAs).

Adviser 6 complements these ideas by promoting a supportive team environment and encouraging a family-like culture among the students through unified development and teamwork. This result confirms the viewpoint of Kafer and Kuger (2018) that utilizing a supportive and constructive method to address student errors has been shown to improve individual motivation and academic performance among students.

Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers mentor student staff through tailored strategies, feedback, and reflection. The study revealed that advisers adopted tailored mentorship strategies to motivate students, foster resilience, and encourage continuous improvement through feedback and reflection. Advisers 1 and 5 focus on using tailored mentorship methods that boost student confidence and success. This idea is congruent to Advincula and Adtoon's (2024) result emphasizing the crucial mentorship role of advisers, showing how their guidance and encouragement positively impacted students' personal and professional development.

Adviser 3 and Adviser 6 share a similar belief in providing comprehensive support through moral, practical, and emotional guidance. This supported Pingol's (2018) notion that the biggest boost to successful school papers is not the rewards but the overall support of the school and the community. Training pupils and managing a school paper is not just the task of one or two teachers but the responsibility of stakeholders.

Through reflective practices and adaptable mentorship, Advisers 2 and 7 empower students to develop resilient mindsets, journalistic skills, and a growth-oriented approach to overcome challenges and thrive in their personal and professional lives. These accounts are congruent with the findings of (Balinas & Ibojo, 2023) that student journalists cope by turning mistakes into motivations.

Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers incorporate digital tools to stay updated with trends in the school publication. Participants mentioned that they are using digital tools and being updated with trends to improve publication quality. Moreover, these advisers underscore the necessity of incorporating digital tools to not only improve the quality of publications but to ensure students are well-prepared for the future of journalism. In this connection Bulusan (2016) underscores the significant influence of technological progressions on journalism in today's rapidly evolving landscape, leading to the obsolescence of traditional practices, especially

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within educational environments where students interact with various forms of mass communication including print, online, and broadcast media. This is parallel to Baticulon et al. (2021) findings, noting that technology boosts advisers' engagement with students by providing better access to content, data, and networks.

Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers focus on grammar and writing quality to enhance publication standards. One of the findings of the study highlights the approach in prioritizing grammar and writing proficiency to improve the overall quality of the school publications. Adviser 1 emphasizes structured feedback and article reviews, focusing on correcting grammar and reinforcing language skills. This is also related to the results of Estella (2015) that writing a good article for school press conferences requires concurrent use of language skills. It starts from vocabulary and spelling to the ability to organize and convey ideas.

Similarly, Adviser 2 and Adviser 7 share a focus on foundational grammar skills, emphasizing the need to address grammar and structure challenges regularly. This aligns with the findings of Rosario and Ibojo (2024), which emphasize that developing foundational skills, such as basic grammar, is crucial for students to effectively address more complex topics.

Upon reflecting on their practices, the school paper advisers promote advocacy-driven reporting in school publications. Another result of the study indicated that school paper advisers encourage students to focus on meaningful, socially relevant, and advocacy-driven stories that go beyond mere reporting. Adviser 4 emphasizes advocacy-driven in creating news centered on important social issues while Adviser 6 also promotes advocacy-driven content through proactive reporting, where students are encouraged to cover stories that highlight significant social causes. This aligns with Peralta's (2014) findings that the school publication serves the immediate readership needs of its students. This aligns with the findings of Ladia (2015), who noted that campus journalism, particularly through editorials, often addresses issues such as budget cuts, tuition fee increases, and efforts to address institutional shortcomings, irregularities, and incompetence, which are primarily relevant to students.

Implication for Education Practice

School paper advisers play a crucial role in the success of student journalists by providing intensive training, fostering teamwork, and developing essential skills. They significantly contribute to the achievements of the publication and the growth of their student journalists. Best practices from award-winning advisers at the national level, including structured training, teamwork, peer learning, tailored mentoring, digital tool integration, focus on grammar and writing quality, and advocacy-driven reporting, are vital for nurturing skilled, socially aware, and impactful student journalists and publications.

These practices may influence future policies by promoting structured and collaborative training programs, ensuring students are proficient in both traditional and digital journalism, and promoting a culture of accountability and social responsibility. Insights from these practices not only enhance student success in journalism but also provide effective methods for improving instruction, encouraging student leadership, and maintaining high-quality student publications, thereby supporting students' overall academic and personal development.

This guidance is valuable for other school paper advisers, aspiring teacher advisers, students, and educational institutions aiming to improve their publications. By adopting these successful approaches, schools may enhance their journalistic output, strengthen mentoring, and cultivate a culture of excellence. School administrators can play a pivotal role by providing more funding, support, and recognition for student publications, creating a positive environment that nurtures aspiring journalists and elevates the standard of campus journalism.

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