

## EXPERIENCES OF SCHOOL PAPER ADVISERS IN SELECTED PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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### Abstract

This study aims to describe the experiences of school paper advisers in selected public and private secondary schools. Using the phenomenological qualitative research design, six (6) School Paper Advisers (SPA) served as the respondents of the study. The findings showed that they have positive experiences including the learnings, connections from other schools, professional enhancement, students' development, negative experiences on resources, training schedule, set-up and judging system, conflict with administrators and other stakeholders. The SPAs' practices are inclined with regular trainings, seminar-workshop, caring for the students, teaching the students the current issues, establishing discipline, preparing the student early, and motivating the students. The problems they encountered are categorized as the support and maintenance, student, and teacher's related, and system's related problems. Additionally, SPAs' strategies in addressing the problems are doing constant communication with the school community, asking for assistance to other concerned and knowledgeable teachers, and looking for financial supporters. SPAs' concerns focused on molding student's character and attitude, skills and knowledge, and the availability of the resources.

**Keywords:** Campus Journalism, School Paper Advisers, School Press Conference

Pente and Ward (2018) stated that campus journalists help make sense of realities not only by providing data but also analysis. In-campus journalism has been practiced over a decade. Undeniably, it has brought impact to the lives of the students. Campus press has been deemed

important because of its significant influence on the thoughts and actions of the students (Gelpi, 2016). However, with the changing of times, campus journalism has faced challenges, especially in the part of the school paper advisers and journalism coaches.

There are nine (9) categories in the annual press conference namely (1) News Writing, (2) Editorial Writing, (3). Editorial Cartooning, (4) Copy Reading and Headline Writing, (5) Feature Writing, (6) Science Writing, (7) Sports Writing, (8) Photo Journalism, and (9) Editorial Column Writing, as stated in the Educational District (EdDis) School Press Conference (ESPC) Memorandum No. 173 s. 2019. Each secondary school shall send five (5) students per category, top ten (10) winners will be announced and will advance to the next level which is the Division School Press Conference (DSPC) where all the winners from the different EdDis will compete again. The top ten (10) will be declared per category again but only top the three (3) will advance to the next level which is the Regional School Press Conference (RSPC) followed by the National School Press conference (NSPC). Many student journalists from different schools compete every year but there are some schools that win consistently. Hence, those schools keep on getting the spot and move to the next level while the others that did not make it are not given a chance to compete in the RSPC. The primary reason for this is the proper training provided by the SPAs of the winning schools to their student journalists.

On the other hand, Republic Act 7079, otherwise known as Campus Journalism Act of 1991, revitalizes the school paper's journey which provides vehicles for teachers to develop young writers and hone the journalistic flair within them. It aims for the development and promotion of campus journalism. These are exactly the reasons there are many schools that are competing in the annual school press conference. Richards and Josephi (2013) claimed that campus journalism, thus, is inherently essential. The primary role of campus journalism is explicitly stated in section 2 of

the act, which is to promote the development and growth of campus journalism as a means of strengthening ethical values, encouraging critical and creative thinking, and developing moral character and personal discipline within Filipino youth. Republic Act 7079 also made campus journalism mandatory in all public elementary and secondary institutions in the country, particularly those that charge journalism fees (Cubilla & Cubillas, 2021).

School press conference is not only a battle among students but also a battle among SPAs or coaches to see who provide student journalists the best practical knowledge needed in journalism to be successful in the contests and in making the school newspaper. In the Division of Bulacan, the SPAs' ways of training and handling their student journalists are being developed every year for there is an annual school press conference. In the last 2019 division press conference, there were 40 schools that competed and out of those 40 schools, ten (10) schools were recognized as overall highest pointers.

Based on the above premises and for the betterment of this study, this was conducted to determine the experiences of the selected secondary schools in the Division of Bulacan. In addition, knowing the concerns and practices of the selected secondary SPAs in handling and providing training to the student journalists will be a great help to identify the overall experiences of the school paper advisers.

### **Scope and Delimitation of the Study**

This study aims to determine the experiences of the selected private and public secondary school paper advisers in the Division of Bulacan. In addition, this study identified the concerns and practices of the SPAs in the training of their student journalists. The target respondents were the winners of the Division School Press Conference 2017, 2018, and 2019.

This study was conducted on the second quarter of school year 2020-2021 and utilized the phenomenological qualitative research in which one-on-one or via video call interview was done to gather the needed data to answer the research question and to attain the objective of the study.

### **Experiences of School Paper Advisers**

A person's life is enriched by their experiences. From being campus paper adviser in school, exposures to press conferences, and providing training on different categories, such as news writing, feature writing, editorial writing, editorial cartooning, sports writing, science and technology writing, copy reading and headlining, and radio broadcasting, several competencies can be acquired and developed and eventually become applicable over time in campus journalism (Nagelhout & Rusche, 2019).

In addition to the issues with campus journalism funds, the lack of awareness of Campus Journalism Act also revealed issues, such as the school paper advisers' teaching overload, the advisers' going beyond technical guidance in terms of the school paper's content, and the schools' lack of moral support for campus journalism programs and activities, to name a few (Babista, 2012).

SPA in public schools is constantly challenged by lack of resources and training in order to adequately equip their students. Another difficulty is the necessity to manage the school paper to produce regular editions. However, in a broader sense, supervising and training pupils are necessary duties for them to learn (Ates, 2016).

Now, there is another level of challenge that campus journalism in schools is facing. The most pressing problem is students' disinterest to be involved and be trained. According to Hewitt and Edwards (2015), school paper advisers and coaches scout for potential writers or go for endorsement from co-teachers, but there are identified students who

would refuse joining the club for some personal reasons. According to Tran & Ragas (2017), the lack of peer support to encourage one to join campus journalism and immediate financial budget for the school paper publication are among secondary challenges at times. Hence, putting campus journalism as an extra-curricular activity or as a club cannot get maximum participation from the students.

According to Ryan (2017), the life of a campus journalist can be described as a plethora of different learning experiences. As a student who actively involves in information-oriented and value-driven pursuit, the experience of learning and fruitful realization unfold with the struggle to be the best journalists they wish to be. Likewise, Gosetti-Ferencei (2020) stated that becoming a campus journalist is a life-long process of learning, unlearning, and relearning. They attend trainings and competitions where they do not only learn the skills and techniques of journalism, but also, they learn the intrinsically important values of self-expression, kindness, aesthetic appreciation, being genuinely informed and self-discipline. For them, journalism especially campus journalism, is a form of holistic development. They do not only learn technicalities of the craft but they also learn the values that make their chosen individual pursuits whole and worthwhile. It is indeed a proof that SPAs have their own experiences on how to properly train their student journalists.

The studies of the authors cited above have proven that there are different experiences, concerns, and problems that SPAs are facing in training campus journalists. Despite the commonalities of the present research problems, this study caters different aspects of experiences of the school paper advisers such as concerns and practices.

## **Research Design**

Phenomenological qualitative research design was used to determine the experiences of the SPAs who won in the division press conference from 2018 to 2019. This was also used to describe the concerns and practices of the SPAs during their campus journalism training and contest proper. Phenomenology is an approach to qualitative research that focuses on the commonality of a lived experience within a particular group. The fundamental goal of the approach is to arrive at a description of the nature of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013). Typically, interviews are conducted with a group of individuals who have first-hand knowledge of an event, situation or experience. Other forms of data such as documents, observations and art may also be used. The data is then read and reread and culled for like phrases and themes that are then grouped to form clusters of meaning (Creswell, 2013). Through this process, the researcher may construct the universal meaning of the event, situation or experience and arrive at a more profound understanding of the phenomenon.

## **Instrument**

The researcher developed open-ended questions that reflect the concerns, experiences, and practices of the school paper advisers in training their student-journalists for the school press conference.

## **Data Gathering Procedure**

Permission to conduct the online interview was sought from the school head chosen for this study. Upon approval of the request, the SPA who is the respondent of the study were informed of the purpose, description, and procedure of answering the questionnaire. In addition, the respondents were informed that all the data were handled carefully such that only the researcher who analyzed it was sent a copy to minimize unauthorized transfer of data.

## **Data Analysis**

Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. It is usually applied to a set of texts, such as interview transcripts. The researcher closely examined the data to identify common themes, topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that come up repeatedly. It emphasizes, pinpoints, examines and records patterns (or "themes") within data. Themes are patterns across data sets that are important to the description of a phenomenon and are associated to a specific research question.

The thematic analysis according to Creswell (2013) follows the following steps: (1) familiarization, which is knowing the data. It is important to get a thorough overview of all the data collected before analyzing individual items; (2) coding, which means highlighting sections of the text usually phrases or sentences and coming up with shorthand labels or "codes" to describe their content; (3) generating themes, or looking over the codes created, identifying patterns among them, and start coming up with themes; themes are generally broader than codes; (4) reviewing themes is to make sure that the themes are useful and accurate representations of the data; (5) defining and naming themes involve formulating exactly what the researcher mean by each theme and figuring out how it helps understanding the data; naming themes involves coming up with a succinct and easily understandable name for each theme; (6) writing up the analysis of the data. Like all academic texts, writing up a thematic analysis requires an introduction to establish the research question, aims and approach.

In addition, content analysis was used to identify the practices and how the school paper advisers address the problem encountered on Division School Press Conference. Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts within some

given qualitative data (i.e. text). By using content analysis, researchers can quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such certain words, themes, or concepts.

## **Results, Findings and Discussion**

### **The Positive and Negative Experiences as School Paper Advisers in Joining the Schools Press Conference.**

Journalism has been practiced on campus in decades. It has undeniably had an impact on the lives of both SPAs and students. Campus news has been recognized crucial because of its substantial influence on students' thoughts and activities. Campus journalism, on the other hand, has experienced obstacles as times have changed, particularly on the part of school paper advisers and journalism coaches.

To provide assistance for the promotion of campus journalism to institutions, Republic Act 7079, also known as the "Campus Journalism Act of 1991," was signed into law to safeguard campus journalism practices in colleges. The Department of Education also created the Special Program in Journalism (SPJ) in 2009 to sharpen the journalistic abilities and competencies of student writers and teachers, as well as to ensure that all parties involved commit to and carry out shared duties in the program's achievement.

However, there are also issues and challenges confronting SPAs and student- journalists such as lack of support, budget, participations, and training (Greene, 2017; Geybulla, 2021). Hence, this study sought to describe the overall experiences of SPAs in joining the Division Schools Press Conference.

### **Positive Experiences of School Paper Advisers in Joining the Schools Press Conference**

Table 1 shows the emergent themes and sub-themes on positive experiences of school paper advisers in joining

the schools press conference. It revolves around the emergent themes 'Intrinsic Factor', 'Extrinsic Factor', and 'Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factor'. Upon analysis, the theme clusters signify the respondents' positive experiences in joining the schools press conference. After assigning significant responses from the participant, the following theme clusters have emerged: 'Learning and Growth Gained, Connections from Different Institution', 'Learning Must Be Vital', 'Students' Acquisition of Knowledge', 'Improving Journalistic Skills among the Students', and 'Professional Enhancement and Students' Development'.

**Table 1**

*Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes on Positive Experiences of School Paper Advisers in Joining the Schools Press Conference*

Theme and Theme Clusters	Formulated Meanings
<i>Theme 1: Intrinsic Factor</i>	
Learning and Growth Gained and Connections from Different Institution	Teacher's acquiring learning, improving journalistic skills, gaining connections from different schools through Schools Press Conference.
Learning Must Be Vital	There is always a room for learning.
<i>Theme 2: Extrinsic Factor</i>	
2.1. Students' Acquisition of Knowledge	Fulfilling when joining the Schools Press Conference with well-trained students and supportive administrators.
2.2. Improving Journalistic Skills among the Students	Improving journalistic skills among the students and motivating them through Schools Press Conference.
<i>Theme 3: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Factor</i>	
3.1. Professional Enhancement and Students' Development	Teachers and students' improving journalistic skills and professional development.

## Negative Experiences of School Paper Advisers in Joining the Schools Press Conference

Table 2 reveals the emergent themes and sub-themes on negative experiences of school paper advisers in joining the schools press conference. It revolves around the emergent themes 'External Factor', 'Internal Factor', and 'No Negative Experience'. Upon analysis, the theme clusters signify the respondents' negative experiences in joining the schools press conference. After assigning significant responses from the participant, the following theme clusters have emerged: 'Resources and Training Schedule', 'Standard Set-Up and Judging System', Conflict with Administrators and Colleagues', 'No Negative Experience'.

**Table 2**

*Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes on Negative Experiences of School Paper Advisers in Joining the Schools Press Conference*

Theme and Theme Clusters	Formulated Meanings
<i>Theme 1: External Factor</i>	
Resources and Training Schedule	School Paper Advisers and students experiencing lack of resources during the training and contest proper. Training schedule conflicting to both advisers and advisees.
Standard Set-Up and Judging System	Lack of clear and concrete memorandum on the standard set-up and the judging system is subjective.
<i>Theme 2: Internal Factor</i>	
2.1. Conflict with Administrators and Colleagues	Unclear internal arrangement between the contest and administrators, teachers, and parents.
<i>Theme 3: No Negative Experience</i>	
3.1. No Negative Experience	No negative experience at all.

### Qualitative Content Analysis on School Paper Advisers' Practices in Maintaining the Winning Spot During Division School Press Conference

Table 3 shows the qualitative content analysis on school paper advisers' practices to maintain the winning spot during the division school press conference. After the content analysis, the result shows the 17 strategies as practiced by the winning schools in joining the Division School Press Conference.

**Table 3**  
*Qualitative Content Analysis on School Paper Advisers' Practices to Maintain the Winning Spot During the Division School Press Conference*

School Paper Advisers' Practices		Frequency
1.	Have a regular training and practice	4
2.	Provide seminar-workshops to the students	3
3.	Give love, affection, and trust to the students	3
4.	Do a brainstorming to the students and one-on-one coaching	3
5.	Prepare the students early and provide time to practice	3
6.	Motivate and inspire the students to learn and work	3
7.	Teach the current issues to the students and let the students write on themselves	3
8.	SPA must be strict and maintain the authority and establish discipline among the students	2
9.	Focus on one category that secures the help of other teachers	2
10.	Accept all the things gained through different experiences	1
11.	Build a safe environment to the students	1
12.	Give an advanced assignment to the students	1
13.	Join a non-DepEd Press Conferences to practice	1
14.	Provide feedbacks to the students	1
15.	Provide incentives to the students	1
16.	Teach the students to listen	1
17.	Provide the needs of the students	1

### Problems Encountered of School Paper Advisers during the Training and Contest Proper on Schools Press Conference

One important reminder to all the school paper advisers is to give attention to the problems encountered during the training and contest proper for this will be a big hindrance for them to win if they will not work on it immediately but it will be a great opportunity to for them to win more if they will look into the solutions as soon as possible.

However, there are several difficulties and concerns that student journalism faces today. One of these, according to Miles (2018), is the fact that, despite the existence of Republic Act 7079 or otherwise known as the Campus Journalism Act of 1991, which provides for the development of campus journalism in the Philippines, about 30% of operating campus publications in Metro Manila alone are not technically capable of producing well-versed and quality newspapers; 25% to 40% of operating campus publications in Metro Manila alone are not technically capable of producing well-versed and quality newspapers; and 25% to 40% of operating campus publications in Metro Manila alone are not technically capable. He also points out that the country now has tens of thousands of young authors, all of whom have become quite vulnerable.

As part of their experiences, Table 4 showcases the emergent themes and sub-themes on problems encountered of school paper advisers during the training and contest proper on schools press conference. It revolves around the emergent themes: Support and Maintenance, Student's Related Problems, Teacher's Related Problems, System's Related Problem, and No Negative Experience. Upon analysis, the theme clusters signify the problems encountered by the participants in joining the schools press conference. After assigning significant responses from the participants, the following theme clusters have emerged: 'Resources', 'Lack of

Support', 'Student's Schedule', 'Student's Academic Performance', 'Parents', 'Subject Teacher's Conflict', 'School Paper Adviser's Dilemma', 'System's Misunderstanding', and 'No Problem Encountered'.

**Table 4**  
*Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes on Problems Encountered of School Paper Advisers During the Training and Contest Proper on Schools Press Conference*

Theme and Theme Clusters	Formulated Meanings
<i>Theme 1: Support and Maintenance</i>	
Resources	SPAs and students experiencing insufficient resources that can be used during the training and the contest proper.
Lack of Support	Lacking support from immediate supervisor hinders the training.
<i>Theme 2: Student's Related Problems</i>	
2.1. Student's Schedule	Co-curricular activities like school press conference splitting the time of the students from training and academics.
2.2. Student's Academic Performance	Performance of the students inside the classroom and in other subject areas affected by the training's schedule.
2.3. Parents	Misunderstanding between the parents/guardians and the schedule of training.
<i>Theme 3: Teacher's Related Problems</i>	
3.1. Subject Teacher's Conflict	Without the presence of the students inside the classroom because of the training, some of the subject teachers are not considerate and tend to give lower grades to the student-journalists.
3.2. School Paper Adviser's Dilemma	SPAs' schedule conflicting to the schedule of the training and other work related to their job descriptions.
<i>Theme 4: System's Related Problem</i>	
4.1. System's Misunderstanding	Judging system and system of the school press conference itself are the challenges in joining the DSPC.
<i>Theme 5: No Negative Experience</i>	
3.1. No Problem Encountered	No problem encountered.

## Qualitative Content Analysis on How the School Paper Advisers Address the Problem Encountered on Division School Press Conference

Table 5 showcases the qualitative content analysis on how the school paper advisers address the problems encountered on division school press conference. It reveals the 11 strategies as principles on how the SPAs address the problems.

**Table 5**  
*Qualitative Content Analysis on How the School Paper Advisers Address the Problem Encountered on Division School Press Conference*

School Paper Advisers' Practices	Frequency
1. Communicate with the principal and subject teachers	3
2. Do not hesitate to ask for assistance to other teachers that you think can help you in training the students	2
3. Ask or look for financial supporters	2
4. Prepare early the students and do an intensive training before the contest	2
5. Every problem should be addressed immediately and do not make the students feel problematic	2
6. Use the World Wide Web as a reference and source	1
7. Do everything to address lack of resources	1
8. Give words of wisdom that motivates the student journalists after the contest whether lose or win	1
9. Strive for excellence during the press conference	1
10. Do a dialogue with the higher authorities and management of the contest to address the problems or concerns	1
11. Do time management	1

## Concerns of School Paper Advisers Regarding the Performance of the Student-Journalists

Campus journalism functions as a way of strengthening the ethical values as it helps develop personal discipline and moral characters. The adviser, often known as the school newspaper adviser, plays an important part in the overall development of student journalists. The adviser must strike a balance between supervising the work and letting the students create their own style in writing and role as a student-journalist. In addition, the adviser must be able to provide sound guidance on all parts of the training, from writing and editing to design and layout.

With that, the school paper adviser's concern with their student-journalists matters in molding and fortifying their journalistic skills which can make them competitive and good journalists. Every aspect can be observed by the school paper advisers for they are focusing on how they can improve their performance as a journalist; therefore, their concerns are just based on what they perceived and observed during the training.

Table 6 shows the emergent themes and sub-themes on the concerns of school paper advisers regarding the performance of the student-journalists. It revolves around the emergent themes: Student's Character and Attitude, Student's Skills and Knowledge, Availability of Resources, and Advancement of Technology.

Upon analysis, the theme clusters signify the respondents' concerns on the performance of the student-journalists. After assigning significant responses from the participants, the following theme clusters have emerged: 'Setting the Mood of the Student-Journalists', 'Students' Enthusiasm and Passion', 'Motivation', 'Quality of the Writers', 'Limited Knowledge', 'Grammar', 'Budget', 'Time', and 'Advancement of Technology'.

**Table 6**

*Emergent Themes and Sub-Themes on the Concerns of School Paper Advisers regarding the Performance of the Student-Journalists*

Theme and Theme Clusters	Formulated Meanings
<i>Theme 1: Student's Character and Attitude</i>	
Setting the Mood of the Student-Journalists	Teaching the student-journalists to love to win, stay humble, and have self-discipline, and know their responsibilities.
Students' Enthusiasm and Passion	Teaching the students become passionate and dedicated on what they are doing.
Motivation	Increasing student-journalists' motivation will increase their confidence to win.
<i>Theme 2: Student's Skills and Knowledge</i>	
2.1. Quality of the Writers	The quality of writers is going down as time goes by and level of skills, motivation, and self-initiative in writing cannot be monitored.
2.2. Limited Knowledge	The knowledge and way of collaborating and brainstorming with the student-journalists due to the restriction of face-to-face meeting are limited.
2.3. Grammar	Grammar skills are the most basic foundation in writing and fundamental instrument in journalism.
<i>Theme 3: Availability of Resources</i>	
3.1. Budget	Financial preparedness should be considered to continue the smooth flow of training.
3.2. Time	Time management is very crucial for the preparation of the student-journalist.
3.3. Advancement of Technology	Winners should be given appropriate technology to proceed on the next level of Press Conference.



## Conclusions and Recommendations

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

1. SPAs have positive and negative experiences toward the participation in the division school press conference which help them and the student-journalists to gain positive attitude toward journalism.
2. School administrators, teachers, and parents play important roles in the development of journalistic skills and positive environment to the student-journalists to win the schools press conference.
3. Resources such as standard set-up, schedule of SPAs and student-journalists, judges, and scoring system are very important factors to win in the schools press conference.
4. SPA-respondents are generous in sharing their practices as winning coaches and they are willing to share these strategies to their competitors.
5. The most common problems that SPAs encountered are related to students, teachers, support and maintenance, and system of the contest.
6. SPAs shared their common strategies in addressing the problems they encountered which is composed of 12 practices.
7. The concerns of SPAs focus in shaping the student-journalists' character, attitude, skills, and knowledge, and also on the resources needed in joining the schools press conference.

## Recommendations

In the light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations were drawn:

1. SPAs should possess positive attitudes despite the negative circumstances in the trainings and participations in the school press conferences by motivating, supporting, and inspiring them.
2. SPAs should develop the journalistic skills among the students as early as possible.
3. School administrators, teachers, and parents should support the SPAs and student-journalists during the training and contest proper.
4. Resources such as budget, standard set-up and internet connection, schedule of trainings, and scoring system should be provided to the SPAs and student-journalists.
5. Aspiring winning SPAs should adapt the 20 recommended practices of the winning SPAs to win the school press conference.
6. Teachers should give due consideration to student-journalists in their quarterly assessment, written and performance tasks on the dates that they are out attending trainings and competitions.
7. SPAs should adapt the 12 strategies in addressing the problems they encountered in the training and participation in the school press conference of the winning SPAs.
8. The SPA must value and revisit the essence of Republic Act No. 7079 which means upholding and promoting campus journalism and campus press freedom, repealing for the purpose Republic Act no.

7079, otherwise known as an Act Providing for the Development and Promotion of Campus Journalism, penalizing violations against campus press freedom, and for other purposes.

9. Future researchers should examine the impact of the 20 practices and the 12 common strategies in addressing the problems in the training of journalism.

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