

The challenges and the coping mechanisms of novice teachers of East Butuan district: Basis for a proposed plan

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Abstract: This study investigated the challenges encountered and coping mechanisms employed by novice teachers in the East Butuan District. Guided by Albert Bandura's Self-Efficacy Theory, the research aimed to examine how the demographic profile of beginning teachers—including educational attainment, certification type, school size, and subject assignment—correlates with their perceived challenges and adaptive strategies. Utilizing a descriptive-correlational research design, the study gathered data through a validated questionnaire administered to 38 novice teachers. Results revealed that novice teachers often face significant school-related challenges, especially in managing disruptive classes and handling overwhelming workloads. Despite these challenges, they demonstrated strong coping mechanisms, primarily through professional collaboration, time management, and reflective practices. The study found a statistically significant relationship between teachers' profiles and both the challenges they faced and the coping mechanisms they adopted. The findings underscore the need for institutional support, especially tailored induction programs, to improve the early career experiences of novice teachers and enhance their professional development. Based on these insights, the study proposed a set of guidelines to support novice teachers in navigating their early years in the teaching profession.

Keywords: novice teachers, coping mechanisms, school-related challenges, teacher induction, self-efficacy theory

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INTRODUCTION

Teachers play an indispensable role in making the community knowledgeable, proactive, committed, and vibrant. They execute one of the fundamental functions of the society, which is educating the minds of the people particularly the children. Teachers as dispenser of knowledge and catalyst of change teach the community to become resilient and active in combating ignorance that holds growth and development. It cannot be denied that teachers are one of the contributors to current innovations and inventions, to economic prosperity, to stable political structures, to well-accepted norms and traditions, to cultural enrichment and cultivation, and as a whole, to the world's dynamic nature. It is said, according to Team Varthana (2023), the quality of a nation depends on the quality of its citizens, and the quality of its citizens depends on their education. The quality of education, in turn, depends on its teachers, who are the backbone of any nation.

The key responsibility of the teachers is to teach. However, teaching does not only involve transferring knowledge or inculcating information to the students. Teaching consists of different functions that teachers must do to provide relevant teaching. Teachers needs to explore the topic to be taught, develop or think of best teaching strategies that will match the interest of the learners, create lessons plan that reflect the scenario of teaching, assess students learning and record students' achievement, monitor students' behavior, communicate student's outcome and

performance. These sets of functions that teachers perform as part of the teaching profession make teaching demanding. According to Hung et al. (2022), teaching is a complex and demanding professional task. The success of teachers in their work has direct implications to the quality of learning of their students. Digital Class (2022) also added that, teaching is a noble profession that comes with so much responsibility and duty towards students. Teachers do not only teach and impart knowledge but inspire and motivate students for life and take important steps in life.

Teachers encounter different challenges while performing teaching. These challenges impact not only their effectivity in teaching but also the overall well-being of the teachers. In the global education monitoring report of UNESCO (2021), there are several factors that are affecting the condition of teachers around the world. These are physical infrastructure, motivation, organizational dimensions, and these factors are seen to be statistically significant relating to working conditions.

Despite the existing policies relating to the promotion of the welfare of the teachers, such as Republic Act No. 4670 otherwise known as “The Magna Carta for Public School Teachers” it was passed into law in view of providing professional rights and safeguards to our public-school teachers in consideration of the exigency and level of difficulty of the exercise of their profession. Still, numerous teachers have been experiencing professional deprivation and challenges while performing their duties. Among that have been so much challenged in line of duty are the newly hired or novice teachers. While newly hired teachers are mostly fresh graduate pre-service teachers in which the concept of educational theories and principles are freshly taught to them but, the lack of experience in teaching public schools and additional non-teaching related task assigned to novice teachers made them prone to factors that made their teaching experience challenging.

In the Schools Division of Butuan City particularly in East District, there are 12 newly hired or novice teachers assigned to different schools in the said district. These 12 newly hired teachers are not exempted of the challenges since, same with other novice teachers, being new in the profession and with limited experiences and being unfamiliar of the system pose a significant challenge among these novice teachers. The process of creating lesson plans can be a steep learning curve fraught with challenges. Initially, they may grapple with translating theoretical knowledge into practical, engaging activities that resonate with their students, understanding the diverse needs and abilities of their learners adds another layer of complexity, requiring careful consideration and adaptation in lesson design.

This had been the motivation of the researcher to conduct the study to provide a systematic analysis and reporting to the challenges and coping mechanism of the novice teachers in East District of Butuan City Division. With this, this study entitled “The Challenges and Coping Mechanism of Secondary Teachers of East Butuan District” aimed to systematically document the challenges and coping mechanisms of the novice teachers in East Butuan District. Particularly, the objectives of this research were, first, determine the demographic profile of the novice teachers in terms of higher educational attainment, type of teacher certificate, school size, and subject assignment. The second objective of this research was to determine the extent of manifestation of the challenges encountered in terms of school related challenges and interpersonal relationships. Part also of the objectives of this research was to investigate the extent of the challenges in terms of school related challenges and the coping mechanism of the novice teachers. Another objective of this research was to know if there is a significant relationship between the profile of the novice teachers and the challenges and the coping mechanisms. Finally, this research would like to propose guidelines to novice teachers based on the findings of this research.

Problem Statement

To achieve the objectives of this research which to determine the extent of manifestation of the challenges as encountered by novice teachers and the coping mechanisms, the following are the questions that the researchers would like to answer.

1. What is the profile of the novice teachers of East Butuan District in terms of:
 - 1.1 Highest Educational Attainment,
 - 1.2 Type of Teachers Certificate,
 - 1.3 Subject Assignment, and
 - 1.4 School Size?
2. What is the extent of manifestation of the challenges encountered by novice teachers of East Butuan District in terms of School Related Challenges?
3. What are the coping mechanisms of novice teachers to address School Related Challenges?
4. Is there a significant relationship between profile and the challenges encountered by the novice teachers?
5. Is there a significant relationship between profile and the coping mechanism of novice teachers?
6. On the basis of the findings of the study, what guidelines for novice teachers may be proposed?

Theoretical framework

This research was anchored on the Self-Efficacy Theory (SET) of Albert Bandura. Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in his or her capacity to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments (Bandura, 1977). The theory also emphasized that self-efficacy reflects confidence in the ability to exert control over one's own motivation, behavior, and social environment. The basic premise of self-efficacy theory is that "people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce desired effects by their own actions". In the context of this research, as the novice teachers have lack of experiences in performing the task and functions, both teaching and administrative role, they rely mostly on their capabilities.

The researcher assumed, in view of the theory of self-efficacy, that novice teachers rely on their capabilities to address challenges they have encountered in terms performing both teaching and administrative functions. Thus, the coping mechanisms that the novice teachers adopted are the outcome from the expected behavior as a consequence to their actions in confronting challenges.

Furthermore, Self-efficacy Theory proposed that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and modeling and is influenced by factors such as attention, motivation, attitudes, and emotions. The theory accounts for the interaction of environmental and cognitive elements that affect how people learn (Bandura, 1977). In the context of this research, novice teachers in the public schools are new to the context and requirements to which the job demand. Having minimal experience of the kind of job to which the novice teachers will accomplish, novice teachers observed or may imitate the practices of seasoned teachers. As the newly hired teachers observe the teaching of the serving teachers, they can model the teaching strategies of the veteran teacher. This relationship can help the newly hired teacher to be effective. While modeling is an important aspect for the novice teacher to learn the basics and nature of the teaching job, this can also be influenced by factors such as level of expertise, education, and level of experience. This situation can inflect different challenging experiences to which the novice teacher encountered.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research employed descriptive – correlational research design. This type of research design tries to explain the relationship between two or more variables without making any claims about cause-and-effect relationships (Bhat, 2022). The aim of descriptive – correlational research design is to describe the relationship among variables rather than to infer cause-and-effect relationships. The methods of descriptive – correlational research design had helped this research to achieve its objectives. Through its features such as description had helped the researcher to describe the variables of interest in this research which the extent of the profile, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the novice teachers. Like correlational research, descriptive correlational research looks at how two or more factors are related. Through applying this another feature of descriptive – correlational research design, the researcher had examined the relationship between the profile, challenges, and coping mechanisms of the novice teachers in East Butuan District.

Locale of Study

This research was conducted at East Butuan District, particularly the Taligaman National High School, Basag National High School, and Eulogio M. Garcia integrated School.

Respondents of the study

The respondents of this research were from the population of teachers in East Butuan District. Particularly, the respondents were the novice teachers assigned to schools in the said district. Per profiling of the researchers, there are 20 novice teachers teaching at specific schools of East Butuan District.

Selection and Description of Respondents

To select the respondents of this research, the researcher employed purposive technique. A purposive technique refers to a group of non-probability sampling techniques in which units are selected because they have characteristics that you need in your sample. In other words, units are selected “on purpose” in purposive sampling. Also called judgmental sampling, this sampling method relies on the researcher’s judgment when identifying and selecting the individuals, cases, or events that can provide the best information to achieve the study’s objectives.

This research utilized criteria to select purposely the respondents of this research. The first criterion was that a teacher must have been teaching 0 – 3 years. The second criterion, was that the teacher should have taught at any schools of East Butuan District regardless of the grade level teaching and subject taught. The third and final criterion, was that the teacher must have no experience in teaching in the private schools.

Data Gathering Instruments

To gather the required data of this research, the researcher utilized a researchers – made structured survey questionnaire in the form of 5 Likert-typed scale. The research instrument was researcher-made questionnaire and composed of two (2) major variables – challenges and coping mechanism. These variables were quantified based on the level of manifestation by which 1 is the lowest with equivalent verbal description of “never, followed by 2 with equivalent verbal description of “rarely, then 3 which will be interpreted as “sometimes, 4 with equal verbal description of often,

and the highest is 5 with verbal description of “always”. Each major indicators will have subsequent behavioral indicators which reflect the behavior to which the major indicators will measure.

Each behavioral indicators of the variables were taken from established research instrument with some modifications of the behavioral indicators making it appropriate in this research. Furthermore, each variables have 16 behavioral indicators that matched the intended behavior to measure. To ensure that the research instrument to which this research utilized is free from errors and inconsistencies, it underwent validity and reliability testing.

Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher employed three stages in data gathering. The first stage of data gathering reflects the preliminary activities to which the research complied, the second stage was the time that the researcher administered the research instrument, and the third stage was during the analysis of the data collected.

In the first phase of data gathering, the researcher wrote a letter addressed to the dean’s office of the graduate studies program of Agusan Colleges to seek approval to conduct the study. A letter was sent also to the office of the school principal of the schools to which this study was conducted to inform the school head on the nature and purpose of the study. A consent letter was sent to the respondents to seek permission and approval to be the respondents of this research. Upon determining the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher informed the respondents on the schedule of the actual survey. The researcher met the respondents for a short introduction about the study and its purpose. After all the preliminary activities were completed, the researcher proceeded to the second stage of the data gathering.

In the second stage, the research administered the questionnaire to the respondents. During this time, the researcher first oriented the novice teachers about the study, its purpose and relevance. The researcher also discussed the questionnaire, its content, structure, and the way in answering the questionnaire. Additional to this, the researcher provided instruction to the respondents as to time and process of the survey. After all the instructions were provided, the researcher then started the survey. Each respondent were provided with a questionnaire, and they were given ample time to answer the survey. To ensure that the respondents answered the questionnaire without any form of errors or biases, the researcher was carefully observed how the participant answered each questionnaire.

After the survey, the researcher then proceeds to the third stage of data gathering. In this stage, the researcher retrieved the survey questionnaire from the respondents and started tabulating the data collected and employed appropriate statistical tools to analyze the data.

Data Analysis Procedure

In analyzing the collected data of this research and provide equivalent description, this study utilized 5 scale range for extent of demonstration. This equivalence was used to analyze the data collected in terms of the extent of challenges encountered and the coping mechanism of the novice teachers. To analyze the extent of relationship between the demographic profile of the respondents and the extent of challenges and the coping mechanism of the novice teachers, the research employed the standard range scale for the extent of relationship.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Profile of the Novice Teachers of East Butuan District I

The findings reveal that the majority of novice teachers in East Butuan District hold a bachelor's degree (65.8%), while a notable portion (34.2%) have pursued graduate-level education through Master's Degree units or Certificates of Advanced Graduate Studies, though none have completed a full Master's or Ph.D. This indicates a positive inclination toward further education, yet also highlights potential barriers to attaining advanced degrees. Furthermore, 52.6% of the respondents have completed a teacher education course, and 47.4% hold professional teaching certifications, reflecting strong foundational preparation for the teaching profession. In terms of teaching assignments, all novice teachers were tasked with handling multiple subjects across both junior and senior high school levels, suggesting a diverse instructional load. Regarding school placement, 36.8% of novice teachers were assigned to small schools, with the rest distributed evenly between medium and large institutions. This balanced distribution implies varied teaching contexts that likely influence their early professional experiences.

Extent of manifestation of the challenges encountered by novice teachers in terms of School Related Challenges

The findings of this study reveals that novice teachers in East Butuan District encounter a high degree of school-related challenges, as reflected in the overall weighted mean of 4.22 with a consistent interpretation of "High" across all behavioral indicators. The most significant challenge identified was managing disruptive classes ($M = 4.39$), suggesting difficulties in classroom discipline and authority establishment due to the teachers' limited experience and unfamiliarity with student behavior. Conversely, the least challenging areas were setting classroom rules and leading class activities (both $M = 4.05$), implying some foundational preparedness in classroom organization and facilitation. These patterns highlight that while novice teachers demonstrate baseline competencies likely gained from their teacher education programs, they still struggle with dynamic, real-time classroom management tasks that require adaptive expertise. Overall, the data suggest that all novice teachers experience substantial school-related challenges, underscoring the need for targeted support systems to ease their transition and strengthen their teaching efficacy.

Level of the coping mechanisms of novice teachers in terms of School Related Challenges

The data presented in Table 4 provide insights into the extent of manifestation of coping mechanisms employed by novice teachers in addressing school-related challenges. The findings indicate that, overall, novice teachers demonstrate a high level of coping strategies, as reflected by the overall weighted mean of 4.45. This suggests that these educators consistently apply various methods to navigate and manage the demands of their profession.

Among the indicators, the highest mean score of 4.61 was attributed to the coping mechanism, "To determine the course objectives, I prefer to the curriculum guide and reference," which was interpreted as having a very high level of manifestation. This indicates that novice teachers heavily rely on curriculum guides and reference materials to guide their instructional planning and ensure alignment with educational standards. This approach is both expected and appropriate, given their relative inexperience and unfamiliarity with the required competencies and instructional content.

Conversely, the indicator "Planning ahead and ensure that the plan is followed" recorded the lowest mean score of 4.37, though still interpreted as high. This suggests that while novice teachers recognize the value of planning, external factors such as unexpected administrative tasks, shifting

school schedules, and personal circumstances may impede their ability to consistently follow through with planned activities. These findings align with the observation by Daniel (2022), which noted that disruptions such as abrupt changes in school calendars and immediate submission deadlines hinder effective planning.

Furthermore, the data reveal that novice teachers engage in proactive coping strategies such as conducting advance research for lessons, using simple yet effective teaching strategies, maintaining classroom order through clear rules, and establishing systems for communication with both colleagues and parents. Notably, indicators like setting clear instructions and referring to the curriculum guide received some of the highest ratings, reflecting their importance in the novice teachers' repertoire of strategies.

In summary, the high level of coping mechanisms observed implies that novice teachers are actively seeking effective ways to address school-related challenges. They often collaborate with peers, utilize curriculum resources, and adapt their teaching strategies to meet student needs, all of which are vital for their professional growth and instructional effectiveness. This suggests a promising level of resilience and adaptability among novice teachers as they navigate the early stages of their teaching careers.

Relationship between profile and the challenges of novice teachers

The result presents the correlation analysis between selected profile variables of novice teachers and the extent of challenges they encountered related to school responsibilities. The analysis reveals that both school size and subject taught have a statistically significant and negative relationship with the extent of challenges faced. Specifically, novice teachers assigned to smaller schools experienced a higher extent of challenges ($\rho = -0.469$, $p = .003$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis for this variable. The negative correlation implies that as school size decreases, the level of challenges increases. This is likely due to the heavier administrative workload and lack of peer support commonly found in smaller school settings. In such contexts, novice teachers often assume multiple responsibilities, including both instructional and non-instructional duties, which heightens their professional burden. This is supported by the findings of David et al. (2019), who noted that new teachers are frequently involved in administrative tasks and government initiatives, further compounding their workload.

Similarly, a significant negative relationship was found between subject taught and the extent of challenges encountered ($\rho = -0.476$, $p = .002$). This suggests that novice teachers who are assigned subjects outside their area of expertise tend to face greater difficulties compared to those teaching subjects they are more familiar with. This misalignment leads to increased preparation time, reduced instructional confidence, and heightened stress. These results align with the study of Jumuad et al. (2021), which found that Filipino teachers experience high levels of workload and burnout, although their performance remains satisfactory. Moreover, the findings are consistent with Kanwal et al. (2023), who emphasized that heavy workloads negatively affect teachers' efficiency, effectiveness, and student learning outcomes.

In contrast, other profile variables such as educational attainment ($\rho = -0.113$, $p = .501$) and teacher certification ($\rho = 0.104$, $p = .536$) did not show significant relationships with the extent of challenges encountered. Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected for these variables, indicating that these factors did not significantly influence the challenges faced by novice teachers in this study.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the importance of strategic teacher deployment, particularly aligning teachers with subjects that match their qualifications and expertise, and

providing adequate institutional support in smaller schools. Doing so may help mitigate the challenges that novice teachers face and improve their capacity to thrive in the profession.

Relationship between profile and the coping mechanism of novice teachers

The data reveal that there are no significant relationships between the profile variables—educational attainment ($\rho = -0.220$, $p = .185$), teacher certification ($\rho = -0.119$, $p = .477$), subjects taught ($\rho = -0.125$, $p = .453$), and school size ($\rho = 0.143$, $p = .391$)—and the level of coping mechanisms employed by the teachers. Since all p-values exceed the .05 significance level, the null hypothesis is not rejected for any of these variables.

This finding suggests that the coping mechanisms adopted by novice teachers are not influenced by their educational background, certification status, subject assignments, or the size of the school to which they are assigned. Instead, their coping responses appear to be shaped more by the intensity or extent of the challenges they encounter in their day-to-day teaching roles. Regardless of profile differences, novice teachers consistently employ coping strategies such as seeking assistance from colleagues, utilizing reference materials, engaging in time management, and implementing simple yet effective teaching strategies to navigate school-related difficulties. This implies a uniform adaptability among novice teachers when confronted with the pressures of the teaching environment. The results underscore the importance of institutional support systems and capacity-building programs that strengthen these coping skills across all teacher demographics, rather than focusing interventions solely on profile-based characteristics.

Proposed Intervention Plan

The purpose of this proposed intervention plan is to reduce the school related challenges as experienced by the novice teachers and help novice teachers in maintaining the level of coping mechanisms towards the experienced challenges. Through this proposed intervention program will help the novice teachers to develop skills that are beneficial as they perform their functions and responsibilities. Furthermore, these intervention programs are designed to fully equip the novice teachers with essential faculties that they need to overcome school related challenges that hinders them to function well.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, several key conclusions were drawn regarding the experiences of novice teachers. First, many novice teachers were assigned to teach subjects beyond their area of expertise, which contributed to their difficulties in classroom instruction and content delivery. Second, the early years of teaching were marked by significant school-related challenges, including administrative tasks, classroom management, and instructional planning. Third, the utilization of coping mechanisms—such as collaboration with peers, time management strategies, and reliance on curriculum guides—proved effective in mitigating the intensity of these challenges. Fourth, the extent of challenges encountered by novice teachers appeared to be independent of their educational attainment, suggesting that even academically prepared individuals are not exempt from the difficulties of transitioning into the teaching profession. Finally, the number of subjects assigned significantly influenced the level of challenge experienced, with teachers handling multiple subjects reporting higher levels of stress and workload compared to those with fewer teaching assignments. These conclusions highlight the

importance of proper subject assignment, structured support systems, and targeted interventions to ease the transition for novice teachers.

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