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Voices of School Press Conference Coaches

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ABSTRACT

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This study explored the voices of School Press Conference (SPC) coaches in the Calamba District as they navigated the delicate balance of surviving and thriving within the competitive journalistic landscape during the school year 2025–2026. Utilizing a qualitative phenomenological design, the research investigated how educators balanced primary teaching responsibilities with the technical demands of campus journalism, the systemic challenges and role strain they encountered, and the coping mechanisms they employed to maintain professional commitment and well-being. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews with fifteen purposively selected participants and analyzed using a thematic approach to capture their lived realities. Findings revealed that while coaches face significant role strain, workload conflict, and emotional pressure, they successfully transition from reactive survival to becoming proactive operations architects. Participants utilized strategic, system-based coping such as automated editorial workflows and digital newsroom infrastructures to achieve organizational mastery. Furthermore, meaning-making and spiritual coping served as vital buffers against burnout. The coaching role has evolved into a systems-driven mentorship. While logistical friction persists, sustaining excellence in campus journalism requires a purpose-driven mindset supported by structured institutional frameworks to transform professional burdens into organizational assets.

Keywords: *lived experiences, meaning-making, operations architect, school press conference (spc) coaches, teacher-coach paradox*

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Introduction

The school's press conference played a vital part as a major source of information that became the basis for creating opinions and dictated individual actions. The Department of Education (DepEd) regularly sponsored the schools press conference, a campus media competition with a variety of features. However, it was not covered by the DepEd's basic education courses, which asked for writing proficiency and involvement from authors known as campus journalists. Students with training who demonstrated enthusiasm, aptitude, and skill in writing and other journalism-related subjects were known as campus journalists. Teachers referred to as coaches in school press conferences or advisers in the campus newspaper instructed and developed these writers. Further, a coach instructed, facilitated, and advised young writers as the means for the success of the student journalists (Calub & Quezada, 2020).

Ullah (2021) asserted that the insufficient professional training of coaches as educators in journalism is one of the reasons for the increase of poorly trained in writing journalists. Not having the professional journalism training and coaching journalism students in ethics led to the creation of poor-quality journalism students. Furthermore, in Pakistan, Martinez (2021) states that journalism coaches also had difficulties, due to the lack of sufficient and relevant experience. These issues are likely to result in poor journalism coaching and poor quality of journalism students' writing.

In addition, in some of the rural areas of Malaysia, journalism teachers are faced with challenges when teaching students how to write journals because of their insufficient teaching materials. They have had to use obsolete references when teaching journal writing to their students. It is their problem to purchase their own money when teaching writing to journalism the references which are current (Nortajuddin, 2020). In the Philippines, Estella (2020) states that some of the teachers who are appointed as trainers of journalism are not competent, as they lack the necessary skills and methods of teaching journalistic writing. Insufficient school backing to motivate someone to participate in campus journalism, as well as lack of available finances for the publication of the school paper, are some of the other problems they encountered. Therefore, the establishment of a campus journalism club in every school may not ensure adequate student involvement (Omay, 2020).

Under the mandates of Republic Act No. 7079 and specific guidelines such as DepEd Order No. 47, s. 2006, along with the annual DepEd Orders governing the National Schools Press Conference, campus journalists and teacher-coaches or advisers were encouraged to attend the various competitive tiers of the program. Individual writing contests were divided into seven categories: editorial, news, sports, and feature writing; headline writing and copy reading; and cartooning. For the team events, there were two categories: desktop publishing and radio broadcasting. These events were held at multiple levels, starting with the schools and ending with the national competition, which served as the ultimate platform for demonstrating journalistic excellence within the Philippine basic education system.

The first step is the Division Schools Press Conference (DSPC). The top three finishers in each category advance to the Regional Schools Press Conference (RSPC). RSPC winners compete in the National Schools Press Conference (NSPC). Natividad and Gapasin (2025) mention emotional and professional investment relating to student development that outstanding advisers describe as lived experiences. These coaches build a winning and competitive spirit in their students beyond writing. This mentorship is what enables a school publication to thrive rather than just survive. The coach, therefore, becomes the most important figure in the campus journalism program. In addition, recent studies indicate coaches are increasingly having to personally subsidize their professional duties.

In the Division of Misamis Occidental, particularly in the Calamba District, numerous elementary and secondary institutions consistently participated in the Division Schools Press Conference. The journalism coaches handpicked the most capable students from their institutions to take part in the competing journalism event. The majority of these elementary and secondary schools, which were in central schools and some which were located in remote areas, served as training and writing workshops but were poorly equipped when it came to exposure to media and newspapers. Coaches were in situations like these where they provided the materials students needed. When students were unable to attend workshops at the regional and divisional levels, the journalism coaches conducted their own training and seminars for the student writers. To meet the journalistic needs, they provided newspapers, news clippings, and other reference materials which were often scarce. Even though coaches

sometimes found it difficult to motivate their student writers to do the work required of them, several student writers ended up winning journalistic contests, specifically securing victories in nine (9) individual events and four (4) group events. Given the scenario above, this study was conducted to determine the voices of school press conference coaches at Calamba Central School during the school year 2025-2026. The study also aimed to find out the reasons teachers took on coaching duties without any prior coaching responsibilities, the difficulties they faced in preparing student journalists for the competition, the enjoyment and satisfaction the coaching brought to them, and the reasons for their resilience and commitment to campus journalism while teaching full-time.

Methods

This study explores the lived experiences of School Press Conference (SPC) coaches in the Calamba District as they navigate the demands of classroom teaching and competitive campus journalism. Using a qualitative phenomenological design, the study involves 15 purposively selected SPC coaches who are full-time teachers with relevant coaching experience and achievements during School Year 2025–2026. Data are gathered through a validated researcher-made semi-structured interview guide and analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s six-phase thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and themes from the participants’ experiences. The study focuses on the challenges associated with dual roles, time constraints, technical and resource limitations, socio-emotional demands, professional identity, and the strategies and support systems that enable coaches to manage these pressures. The findings provide a deeper understanding of how SPC coaches move from merely surviving the demands of journalism coaching toward thriving as educator-mentors and serve as a basis for strengthening institutional, technical, and professional support for campus journalism coaches.

Results and Discussions

Theme 1. Navigating the Teacher-Coach Paradox: Role Strain, Workload, and Emotional Pressure

The first major theme, Navigating the Teacher-Coach Paradox: Role Strain, Workload, and Emotional Pressure, captures the difficulties experienced by School Press Conference (SPC) coaches as they simultaneously perform their primary responsibilities as classroom teachers and their additional responsibilities as journalism mentors. The participants’ narratives reveal that coaching is not simply an additional task that can easily be inserted into the regular teaching schedule. Instead, it creates a continuous process of shifting attention, identity, priorities, and emotional energy between classroom instruction and journalism preparation. The soft copy describes this experience as a “teacher-coach paradox,” wherein coaches are expected to maintain quality classroom instruction while simultaneously preparing student-journalists to meet the demanding standards of competitive campus journalism. This tension becomes especially pronounced during competition periods, when lesson preparation, checking and grading, classroom management, journalism training, editing, technical preparation, and competition deadlines occur almost simultaneously. One participant described fulfilling both roles as “draining,” while another explained that the mental strain of constantly “switching” identities produces exhaustion and uncertainty about how the two responsibilities can be balanced.

The findings therefore suggest that the struggle extends beyond ordinary time management. It includes role conflict, professional anxiety, emotional exhaustion, limited rest, and the fear that prioritizing one responsibility may result in neglecting the other. This is particularly important because the coaches remain conscious that their classroom learners should not be disadvantaged by their involvement in SPC activities. As one participant expressed, coaches are expected to “produce winners while ensuring no student is left behind in the classroom,” illustrating the pressure to achieve competitive excellence without compromising academic responsibilities. The experience is consistent with the literature incorporated in the soft copy. Lauroza (2025) associates classroom and extracurricular responsibilities with professional role ambiguity and mental fatigue, while Maculada et al. (2025) relate high-stakes mentoring responsibilities positioned outside the regular teaching role to the possibility of professional and pedagogical burnout. Cubillas (2021) similarly recognizes the hidden workload experienced by public school teachers who simultaneously serve as teachers, coaches, and journalism mentors. Hao (2021) further explains that poorly defined professional assignments may prevent teachers from obtaining restorative breaks and participating in professional development, while Paguirigan (2023) associates such conditions with reduced instructional effectiveness. These findings indicate that role strain among SPC coaches should not be understood solely as an individual inability to manage time. Rather, it reflects a structural challenge created when two demanding professional responsibilities compete for the same limited time, attention, and energy. The coaches demonstrate commitment and resilience, but continually depending on personal sacrifice may eventually affect their well-being and instructional effectiveness. The soft copy

consequently points toward the importance of clearly defined coaching responsibilities, formal coaching hours, workload adjustments, and stronger institutional mechanisms that protect both instructional quality and the socio-emotional well-being of SPC coaches.

Theme 2. Working Through Constraints: Resourcefulness, Organization, and Adaptive Support

The second major theme, Working Through Constraints: Resourcefulness, Organization, and Adaptive Support, reflects how SPC coaches respond to limited time, inadequate facilities, insufficient equipment, weak institutional support, and overlapping professional demands by developing their own practical systems and collaborative strategies. Rather than allowing these limitations to completely prevent journalism training, the participants demonstrate considerable resourcefulness by reorganizing schedules, preparing instructional and journalism materials in advance, using digital tools, collaborating with colleagues, integrating journalism activities into classroom instruction, and even using personal resources when school resources are unavailable. The soft copy identifies strict time-blocking, task prioritization, workflow management, work batching, digital tracking, role compartmentalization, and advance preparation as important strategies employed by the coaches. One participant explained that strict time-blocking and digital tools are used to keep track of responsibilities, while another prepares lessons and school paper materials together so that essential materials are already available once competition season begins. These strategies illustrate that the coaches do not simply endure workload pressure; they actively create systems that enable them to function under demanding conditions.

The soft copy describes this transition as moving from merely “surviving” toward “thriving,” because organization becomes a means of protecting instructional time while maintaining the quality of journalism mentorship. However, the participants’ adaptive capacity is also tested by serious material constraints. Coaches report inadequate journalism spaces, outdated equipment, insufficient computers and cameras, unstable internet connectivity, and dependence on personal devices and mobile data. Some participants even bring equipment from home so their student-journalists can practice properly. These experiences reveal a significant resource-performance gap between the standards expected during competitions and the actual resources available at the school level. The soft copy relates these conditions to Shah et al. (2024), who emphasize that inadequate specialized materials and infrastructure can hinder technical mentoring, and Sharma and Chand (2025), who associate resource scarcity with increased cognitive demands on teachers. Mandap (2024) similarly describes a resource-performance gap in the Philippine public-school context, while Miah (2024) discusses how inadequate connectivity and computing resources contribute to unequal educational opportunities.

Barnová et al. (2023), meanwhile, connect teachers’ efforts to bridge such resource gaps with resilience. Collaboration also emerges as a central adaptive mechanism. Because formal coaching hours and administrative relief are limited, coaches depend on colleagues, informal mentoring arrangements, and flexible assistance from school leaders. One participant emphasized the need to collaborate with colleagues so that classes remain covered during journalism training. Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the ability of SPC coaches to continue delivering both instruction and journalism mentorship is sustained by a combination of personal organization, technological adaptation, improvisation, peer collaboration, and resourcefulness. Nevertheless, their success should not justify continued dependence on personal sacrifice. The findings instead highlight the need to institutionalize the practices that already work by providing adequate journalism resources, designated coaching time, digital systems, formal peer-support structures, appropriate equipment, reliable connectivity, and administrative arrangements that distribute responsibilities more equitably.

Theme 3. From Surviving to Thriving: Professional Growth, Purpose, and Meaning in Journalism Mentorship

The third major theme, From Surviving to Thriving: Professional Growth, Purpose, and Meaning in Journalism Mentorship, captures the transformative dimension of the participants’ experiences. Despite the workload, resource limitations, emotional strain, and competitive pressure associated with SPC coaching, the participants do not view journalism mentorship purely as an additional burden. Their experiences also become opportunities for professional learning, identity development, greater confidence, improved organizational competence, and a deeper sense of purpose as educators. The soft copy identifies professional growth and identity development through improved time management, strengthened teaching and mentoring skills, increased confidence and self-efficacy, and the gradual transformation from being “just teachers” into specialized journalism mentors. This transformation is important because SPC coaching exposes teachers to technical competencies beyond

routine classroom instruction, including writing, editing, layout, photojournalism, digital media, and other evolving forms of journalistic practice. At the same time, the pressure to remain competitive forces coaches to continually learn and adapt. Thus, the teacher-coach paradox has a developmental side: although it increases workload, it also expands the coaches' professional capabilities and reshapes their understanding of what it means to be an educator and mentor. More importantly, the participants derive meaning from the growth and success of their student-journalists. One participant explained that seeing a student master a lead or layout becomes a source of joy as an educator, while another stated that being both a teacher and a coach representing the school provides an identity that sustains motivation even when deadlines accumulate.

Another participant emphasized that passion for campus journalism provides the energy needed to continue despite reports, training demands, and fatigue. These narratives indicate that motivation is strongly connected to meaning-making. Student improvement, competition achievements, strengthened confidence, and the opportunity to guide young journalists transform coaching from an additional assignment into a personally and professionally meaningful form of mentorship. The participants therefore demonstrate a progression from simply coping with the demands of the role toward developing a stronger professional identity and finding fulfillment in their contribution to learners. At the same time, this growth should not be romanticized as a reason to accept excessive workload or inadequate institutional support.

The soft copy shows that professional development among coaches often occurs through rapid and self-directed learning because specialized training and institutional recognition remain limited. The participants therefore need professional development opportunities that address not only journalism competencies but also the actual dual-role realities of teacher-coaches. Ultimately, the theme demonstrates that thriving does not mean the absence of difficulty; rather, it represents the coaches' ability to transform difficulty into professional competence, resilience, purpose, and meaningful service to student-journalists. This transformation captures the central essence of their lived experience: although SPC coaches begin by struggling to balance competing responsibilities, they gradually develop systems, relationships, competencies, and a stronger sense of purpose that enable them to become more adaptive and confident educator-mentors.

Conclusions

The study concluded that the voices of School Press Conference (SPC) coaches represented a complex, high-stakes journey of balancing professional instruction with the specialized demands of journalism mentorship, characterized by a persistent tension between surviving and thriving within the Teacher-Coach Paradox. While the dual role and identity conflict imposed a substantial emotional and psychological burden, coaches effectively utilized strategic and system-based coping to navigate role strain and resource limitations. Coaches recognized that individual grit was insufficient without organizational mastery; instead, they adopted a strategic partner mindset and built sustainable operational infrastructures to safeguard both their instructional quality and their students' competitive success. Ultimately, these SPC coaches demonstrated that educators in the Calamba District effectively leveraged adaptive and integrative strategies without compromising their professional commitment or personal well-being, though the instructional pressure and policy gaps of the time highlighted an urgent need for formalized institutional frameworks and mental health support systems from the district to ensure a sustainable coaching environment. The meaning-making process remained a vital element of their vocational identity, suggesting that the most robust campus journalism programs emerged when professional excellence and inner peace were harmonized, provided that the coach was supported by a structured system of strategic and emotional care.

Recommendations

The recommendations emphasize the need for a shared and institutional approach to strengthening School Press Conference (SPC) coaching, rather than placing the responsibility solely on individual teacher-coaches. DepEd officials, district coordinators, policymakers, and school administrators are encouraged to establish designated coaching time, equitable workload arrangements, clear role expectations, formal recognition, adequate resources, and flexible support mechanisms that allow coaches to balance classroom instruction and journalism mentorship effectively. Stakeholders, including local government units, alumni, and community partners, are encouraged to provide financial and logistical support for journalism facilities, equipment, and other technical needs. School paper advisers and coaches should strengthen their use of digital tools, organized workflows, professional boundaries, collaboration, peer support, and student leadership to reduce workload while

maintaining quality instruction and competitive journalism performance. Student-journalists should likewise assume responsible leadership roles, practice discipline, and actively participate in managing newsroom activities and deadlines. Finally, future researchers are encouraged to examine the long-term effects of journalism coaching and digital upskilling on teachers' professional development and conduct broader quantitative or mixed-method studies on workload, institutional support, and resource-performance gaps to provide stronger evidence for policies that promote sustainable campus journalism programs.

Conflict of Interests

The author declares that they have no conflicts of interest

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