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# Classroom Teaching and Management: Experiences of Novice English Teachers

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**Abstract.** Novice English teachers experience a rollercoaster of emotions and challenges. This study aimed to describe the experiences of novice teachers in their first year of teaching in the Department of Education in the Philippines. The paper employed qualitative research design, using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Ten newly employed teachers in the Department of Education within the Cebu City Division participated in the study. Participants had taught at the basic education, Junior High School level, for two (2) years, occupying a permanent/regular teaching position from School Year 2021 to 2023. After intensive analysis of the data, three themes emerged: a) classroom management dilemmas, b) cutting-edge instructional techniques, and c), emotional and psychological encounters. The informants confronted challenges but made remarkable contributions through their in-depth knowledge of technology integration. Overall, the study highlights the need for ongoing professional development, mentoring, and the integration of research-based practices to support novice teachers effectively. Future research could focus on the first five years of teaching experience to see how well novice teachers cope with the challenges and how fast they adapt to the system.

**Keywords:** novice teachers; classroom management; classroom teaching; lived experiences

## 1. Introduction

A successful classroom depends on the expertise of a teacher in managing the classroom. Every educator starts a teaching career as a novice teacher who has been equipped with theory but is confronted with unrealistic expectations when employed in real classroom settings (Campisi, 2019). Novice teachers take on roles and responsibilities of managing the classroom and teaching the learners both simple and complex concepts. At the beginning the teaching profession, teachers require specific elements. Mentorship, school support, essential information, teaching and learning strategies, and extracurricular activities are all important for new teachers (Awang & Shaari, 2021). These are crucial components that will enhance their ability to teach in the classroom.

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Novice teachers, particularly those with fewer than two years of experience, are frequently assigned to more challenging classrooms with a higher proportion of underprivileged and low-achieving pupils than their more seasoned counterparts although they have less professional experience. Novice teachers must also deal with more students with disciplinary concerns than their veteran counterparts, in addition to having a higher proportion of English language learners (Campisi, 2019). This study also found that novice teachers were more likely to work in schools with fewer experienced colleagues. Since an educator's instructional load is "the most consistent predictor of teachers' outcomes," putting novice teachers in these more challenging environments may impair their effectiveness (Campisi, 2019). According to Stenberg and Maaranen (2021), difficulties encountered early in a career are not limited to problems with teaching effectiveness or working with youth, they also stem from basic considerations about personal issues. Tammets et al. (2018) discovered that a large number of new instructors believed that other educators and administrators were not doing enough to encourage them. Creating a cohesive induction program seems to be difficult, given the complexity of the extended professional community of educators, where several partners work together and exchange professional information.

New public school teachers face challenges in dealing with student differences because they are new to the system and the community. Hermosisima et al. (2018) showed that new teachers struggled most with large courses, student differences, and classroom management. Despite these challenges, the main forms of support offered were training, school-initiated programming, and coworker support. Kozikoglu and Cokuk (2017) identified four categories of difficulties faced by new teachers: relational (issues with parents, administrators, and colleagues), instructional (challenges in classroom management, planning, and instruction), adaptation (adjusting to the school, environment, and profession), and physical (lack of social amenities and teaching materials). Ergunay and Adiguzel (2019) propose that research before the pandemic can be divided into four groups: studies that concentrate on (a) proposed implications for curricula in pre-service teacher education, (b) the impact of pre-service teacher education on the first year of teaching, (c) modifications to the competencies of beginning teachers during this time, and (d) difficulties faced by beginning teachers during this time.

Novice teachers go through demanding times. However, Stewart and Jansky (2022) pointed out that two common strategies work well with novice teachers. First, novice teachers should know how to reconcile the theories they learned with the practices in the classroom. Second, they should learn how to establish meaningful and harmonious relationships with veteran teachers. These techniques support the professional development of inexperienced instructors in the classroom and in the teaching field as a whole (Awang & Shaari, 2021; Sumalinog, 2018). Makoa and Segalo (2021) assert that early-entry instructors must be given enough time to apply and integrate their new knowledge in the classroom, as this builds teachers' confidence in their teaching and leads to their success. Through professional learning communities, where instructors are encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences and to support one

another's professional learning experiences, new practices can be further reinforced. The inexperienced instructors emphasized that such learning communities would be perceived as a benefit rather than a burden if the professional development of teachers considered their unique needs (Campisi, 2019).

Given that the first two years of teaching are a crucial stage of teacher preparation in terms of theory and practice, it is important to look at this period and the unfiltered first-year experiences of the department's instructors. In this study the Junior High School teachers' relevant experiences that are possibly unknown to other novice teachers may be brought to light and become the basis for avoiding teaching malpractice. The purpose of this research is to highlight the problems of novice teachers so that they can be addressed immediately. Senior High School teachers could be the focus of inquiry since DepEd has already been hiring new teachers. As to the scope, this study could be duplicated by other regions, so teachers in their first year of teaching may be ready to face the Herculean tasks and teaching responsibilities physically, emotionally, and cognitively.

## **2. Research Questions**

This study aimed to describe the experiences of novice teachers in their first two years of teaching. The additional goal of this paper is to examine the stories of successes and struggles, as new teachers immerse themselves in the profession with enough knowledge of the theories, but less real experience.

It sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the classroom and management dilemmas of the novice teachers?
2. What are the instructional techniques employed by the teachers?
3. What are the sources of stress and the coping mechanisms of the informants?

## **3. Methods**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This paper employed qualitative research design, using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyze the data (Smith & Osborn (2007). The primary focus of an IPA study is the meanings that participants attach to certain experiences, events, and states. The IPA sought to investigate in-depth how participants made sense of their personal and social environments. As such, IPA is appropriate for qualitative research because it focuses on exploring individuals' lived experiences and how they make sense of those experiences. This design allows researchers a deeper understanding of the subjective perspectives of participants, making it ideal for studies that seek to uncover personal meaning and complex emotions.

### **3.2 Research Informants and Environment**

The informants of the study were 10 newly-employed teachers in the Department of Education (DepEd) within the Cebu City Division. Purposive sampling was used, ensuring that participants were specifically chosen based on their relevance to the research topic. This method allowed the researcher to focus on individuals who could provide rich, detailed insights into the experiences being studied. The inclusion criteria included: a) participants should have taught in the basic

education, Junior High School level, for two years, occupying a permanent/regular teaching position from School Year 2021 to 2023; and b) the teachers should have been given subjects that were aligned with their area of specialization.

### 3.3 Research Instruments

A semi-structured interview guide was used for this study. Its content was originally crafted but was checked and validated by three research professors. The questions capture the challenges met and best practices applied during limited face-to-face classes. After using the interview guide, the responses of the informants were referred back to them for validation of the interpretation.

### 3.4 Data Gathering Procedure

- a) **Pre-gathering stage.** The study's proposal was sent to the Ethics Review Committee before the actual data collection phase for verification that the study complied with the ethical considerations. The informants were also emailed an Informed Consent Letter. A demographic letter asking for the participants' details, preferred times for the interviews, and what equipment they had access to was sent with it.
- b) **Actual data gathering stage.** The data was gathered in face-to-face interviews of 45 to 60 minutes. The participants were informed that the conversation would be recorded, but would be kept confidential. The interview started with some introductory questions to prepare the participants for the interview questions. A key informant interview is a qualitative, in-depth interview with people who are familiar with the community; it involves engaging in conversation with people who have clear and informed perspectives on the program and plan being evaluated (Macfarlan, 2014).
- c) **Post-data gathering stage.** The interview ended once the interview reached the data saturation stage. The participants' details were then collected for the distribution of the school supplies as tokens. Data analysis followed the interviews. The recordings were played multiple times as the researcher transcribed and captured the meanings, clusters of themes, and emerging themes from the transcripts using the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) steps. The recording was kept until the publication of the study, after which it was shredded.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

Five steps of the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) were employed in the analysis of data (Smith & Osborn, 2007):

1. **Looking for a theme in each case.** The transcripts were read and reread multiple times to become intimate and familiar with them. The transcript provided a source of noteworthy, captivating, and arresting remarks.
2. **Looking for connections.** At this point, the clustered emergent themes were listed on the right of the paper. Where necessary, informants were referred to for validation.
3. **A table of themes.** Once all the concepts had been grouped and identified, they were arranged logically, based on links visible at this stage. Care was taken during this process to avoid biases.

4. **A master list of themes for the group.** The final list of themes developed as the investigation progressed after the IPA. At this point, too, the researcher consciously avoided bias.
5. **Write-up.** The master list of themes served to guide the writing of the report for publication or degree submission. The researcher's primary duty shifted to fact-narrative.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

##### Theme 1: Classroom Management Dilemma

Classroom management dilemmas often arise when teachers implement experimental classroom rules and procedures without a solid foundation in research-based techniques. Informants 3 and 8 mentioned:

*"As a new teacher, I always try to experiment." (P3)*

*"You have to try new things." (P8)*

These experimental approaches can lead to inconsistent enforcement of rules, creating confusion and uncertainty among students and leading to difficulties in classroom management. Classroom dilemmas are normally experienced by novice teachers, especially in their first few years (Gnann & Sevia, 2022). Without the backing of proven strategies, teachers may struggle to maintain order and effectively address behavioral issues, ultimately hindering the learning environment's overall effectiveness and stability. Shank (2023), and Kozikoglu and Cokuk (2017) agree that most novice teachers appeared unprepared to take on classroom management roles. Some of them do not have the competence to manage a classroom (Hang et al., 2022).

##### Sub-Theme 1: Experimental Classroom Rules and Procedures

Experimental classroom rules and procedures refer to untested or innovative strategies that teachers might implement in an attempt to manage their classrooms more effectively. However, when rules and procedures are not consistently applied, students become unsure of what is expected of them, leading to a lack of discipline and respect for authority (Badawi, 2024). Such inconsistency can disrupt the learning environment, as students might test boundaries more frequently, unsure of the consequences. Without clear, predictable guidelines, the classroom atmosphere can become chaotic, making it challenging for both teachers and students to focus on educational objectives. Teachers resort to experimenting with ways of managing a classroom because they are sometimes uncertain of what to do (Shank & Santiago, 2021; Hermosisima et al., 2018). Stewart and Jansky (2022) pointed out that two common strategies will work well with novice teachers: a) knowing how to reconcile the teaching theory they learned with the reality of practices in the classroom, and b) discovering new strategies to meet the need of the learners. In the study, participants 2, 6, and 8 expressed:

*"Most of the time, I experiment [with] ways on how to manage my classroom and my students." (P2)*

*"You should look for ways to address the chaos in the classroom; that's why I don't stop trying new things. The good thing was, some of them worked." (P6)*

*"Experimenting is the key since I am new to the profession." (P8)*

The statements from Participants 2, 6, and 8 highlight a common practice among new educators who resort to experimenting with various classroom management strategies owing to their lack of experience and established techniques. This trial-and-error approach indicates a proactive effort to address classroom challenges and improve the learning environment. However, it also underscores the importance of implementing effective, consistent, and evidence-based management practices from the outset. As facilitators of learning, teachers should understand their students first and foremost (Bengtsson & Mickwitz, 2022). According to Maag-Merki et al. (2023), routine repair is one tactic to purposefully alter routines in a particular circumstance to effectively handle tangible obstacles. Makoa & Segalo (2021) assert that it is more successful to give early-entry instructors enough time to apply and integrate their new knowledge in the classroom, as this builds teachers' confidence in their teaching.

### **Sub-Theme 2: Lack of Research-based Classroom Management Techniques**

The lack of research-based classroom management techniques stems from the tendency of novice teachers to rely solely on what they learnt during their initial training, without pursuing further research to enhance their practice. This limited approach results in the application of basic, often outdated strategies that may not effectively address the diverse and dynamic challenges of a real classroom. Bergmark (2020) said that research-based classroom management is essential because it models the successful application of teaching strategies of experienced teachers. It is also essential to remember that research-based strategies go through a thorough investigation (Shaban, 2024; Gnann & Sevianm, 2022). Participants 1 and 10 mentioned:

*"The classroom management that I used are [sic] those which I experienced when I was a student." (P1)*

*"I only recall how my teachers [acted] when I was a student to resolve classroom problems. No more time to read." (P10)*

The reliance on classroom management techniques based solely on personal student experiences implies a significant gap in the adoption of contemporary, research-based methods. Teachers defaulting to the strategies they observed as students, without dedicating time to study and integrate modern educational research, risk perpetuating outdated and potentially ineffective practices. This approach can limit the effectiveness of classroom management, as it does not leverage the latest insights and strategies proven to address the evolving challenges of today's educational environments. However, some teachers struggle to translate research-based results into actual procedures in the classroom (Abao et al., 2023; Georgiou et al., 2023). So it is crucial to seek support from more knowledgeable others in the community of which they are part.

## Theme 2: Cutting-edge Instructional Techniques

Cutting-edge instructional techniques emphasize innovative approaches to teaching that cater to diverse student needs and leverage modern technology. This entails adapting lessons to fit a variety of learning preferences and skills levels, guaranteeing that every student can access the curriculum in a manner that best meets their requirements. Academic attainment and motivational-affective traits of high achievers were positively enhanced by differentiated instruction (Ziernwald et al., 2022; Bunghanoy & Sumalinog, 2023). Additionally, the theme incorporates the use of advanced technological tools and digital resources to enhance learning experiences, engage students, and provide interactive and dynamic instruction. Together, these elements highlight how novice English teachers can utilize contemporary strategies to create more inclusive, effective, and engaging learning environments.

**Sub-Theme 1: Differentiated Instruction.** According to Roberts and Inman (2023), differentiated instruction entails modifying learning activities to meet the needs of students with a range of learning styles and skill levels. This method aims to give students a variety of approaches to comprehend and interact with the material while acknowledging that they have different backgrounds, learning styles, and strengths. Participants 5 and 9 said:

*“As a new teacher, it is still fresh in my mind the importance of using differentiated instruction. It worked for my students though it was tiring.” (P5, Ana)*

*“Differentiated instruction became one of my best ways of instructing because my students are diverse. Some are faster learners, some are slow. Some are creative, while some are not.” (P9, Ray)*

Teachers may modify content, processes, products, or the learning environment to better meet the individual needs of each student. Differentiated instruction also has positive effects (Pozas et al., 2023). The implementation of differentiated instruction could include offering varied types of assignments, using different teaching methods, providing additional support or challenges, and incorporating technology to personalize learning. The goal is to ensure that all students, regardless of their unique learning profiles, have equitable access to education and can achieve their fullest potential.

The statements underscored the critical importance and effectiveness of differentiated instruction in catering to a diverse student population. Despite being a demanding and time-consuming approach, new teachers recognize its value in addressing the varied learning paces and styles within their classrooms. This commitment to tailored instruction demonstrates an understanding of the need for flexible teaching strategies that accommodate every student's needs. Hidayah et al. (2023) explains that differentiated instruction increases students' performance and accommodates varied learning needs that traditional teaching cannot address. However, it also highlights the necessity for adequate support and resources to sustain such efforts without overwhelming educators.

### **Sub-Theme 2: Technology-integrated Instruction**

Technology integration in teaching involves leveraging the latest technological tools and digital resources to enhance the educational experience. This includes integrating devices such as tablets, laptops, and interactive whiteboards, as well as software and applications that facilitate learning. Teachers use virtual reality to create immersive learning environments, online platforms for collaborative projects, and educational games to make learning more engaging. Digital resources like videos, simulations, and interactive tutorials can address the varied needs of the students and offer students hands-on experiences that deepen their understanding of the material (Akram et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2020). By incorporating these advanced technologies, teachers create interactive and dynamic lessons that capture students' interest, encourage active participation, and improve overall educational outcomes. This method not only increases student enjoyment of the learning process but also gets them ready for a world dominated by technology. Participants 2, 4, and 9 stated:

*"This is not to brag, but I noticed that my ability to use technology in the classroom helped a lot. My students enjoy learning with technology and they regard me as someone different and dedicated." (P2)*

*"I can work well with technology, so I use it more often than other teachers. Technology catches my students' attention." (P4)*

*"Knowing how to use the technology present in the classroom is an advantage. With technology, teaching is easy and enjoyable to students." (P9)*

These remarks emphasized the transformative impact of integrating technology into the classroom, highlighting its role in enhancing student engagement and learning enjoyment. Teachers who are proficient in utilizing technology are perceived as innovative and dedicated, distinguishing themselves from their peers. The ability to effectively incorporate technological tools not only captures students' attention but also facilitates a more dynamic and interactive learning experience. This suggests that technological proficiency is a significant advantage for modern educators, underscoring the need for ongoing training and support in digital literacy to maximize the benefits of technology in education (Almaiah et al., 2022; Lefebvre, 2022). According to Alajmi (2022), digital leadership influences teachers' technology integration.

### **Theme 3: Communication and Collaboration**

Emotional and psychological experiences refer to the internal struggles encountered by novice educators. This theme explored the various sources of stress new teachers encounter, such as managing classroom dynamics, balancing the workload, and adjusting to new responsibilities. Shank (2023) mentioned that novice teachers are unprepared to deal with issues related to behavior, so, it is important to understand these stressors. The theme also examines the coping mechanisms that novice teachers can use to recover from stress. These strategies may include time-management techniques, seeking support from mentors,



practicing relaxation methods, and setting realistic goals. For Vu et al. (2022), novice teachers should be exposed to classroom observations, apprenticeship, teaching practicum, and self-discovery so they can cope with the situation in the real world. By identifying sources of stress and implementing effective coping mechanisms, novice teachers can better manage their emotional and psychological well-being, enhancing their overall effectiveness and job satisfaction.

### **Sub-Theme 1: Sources of Stress**

Sources of stress for novice teachers encompass managing classroom dynamics, balancing a heavy workload, and adjusting to new responsibilities. Handling diverse student behaviors and maintaining discipline can be particularly challenging (von Haaren-Mack et al., 2019; Sumalinog et al., 2022) while juggling lesson planning, grading, and administrative tasks adds to the workload. According to Shank and Santiago (2021), novice teachers have all the new ways of delivering lessons, but they lack some practical approaches to managing a classroom, and this contributes to their mental stress. They also experience a rollercoaster of emotions (Lindqvist et al., 2022; Stenberg & Maaranen, 2021). Additionally, acclimating to new roles and school expectations can create significant pressure. Understanding these stressors is crucial for effectively addressing their impact and finding strategies to manage them, ultimately improving both teacher well-being and performance. Participants 3, 7, 8, and 10 responded:

*"I thought that the work of a teacher is only to teach. I was surprised that I as an adviser had to do many things to manage my class and do some paperwork." (P3)*

*"Besides delivering lessons and disciplining my students every day, I also have administrative tasks and other workloads. They contribute to my stress." (P7)*

*"The culture of the school and the added responsibilities are sometimes hard to bear." (P8)*

*"There are so many things to do besides teaching. I had a time adjusting." (P10)*

The statements reveal the multifaceted nature of teaching, which extends far beyond instructional duties to encompass extensive administrative responsibilities and classroom management tasks. New teachers often face the surprising and overwhelming reality of balancing lesson delivery, student discipline, and paperwork, contributing significantly to their stress levels (Pozas et al., 2023). Although teaching is a demanding and highly rewarding job, several characteristics are associated with depression, anxiety, burnout, and stress in teachers (Agyapong et al., 2022). Additionally, adapting to the school's culture and handling the cumulative workload can be particularly challenging, emphasizing the need for adequate professional development to help educators manage these diverse responsibilities effectively and maintain their well-being.

### **Sub-Theme 2: Coping Mechanism**

Coping mechanisms for novice teachers involve various strategies to manage stress effectively. These include seeking guidance and support from experienced mentors to navigate challenges and practicing relaxation methods such as mindfulness or deep breathing to reduce anxiety. To prevent stress from affecting novice teachers, Boyle (2023) suggested that they have mentors to guide them. Work-based programs that strengthen teachers' coping mechanisms are necessary to reduce psychological discomfort and boost the general welfare of teaching professionals (Stapleton et al., 2020). Additionally, setting realistic and achievable goals helps to maintain focus and prevent feelings of being overwhelmed. One example was to list down the things to do and revisit them from time to time. Implementing these strategies can help novice teachers manage their stress levels, leading to a more balanced and effective teaching experience. Participants 3, 5, and 7 said:

*“Besides managing my time and searching for solutions to the problem by researching, I also ask help from my mentors and some experienced teachers. I consider their rich experiences.” (P3)*

*“It is important to set goals and ask assistance from those who have been in service for years already. From there, I then manage my time by following their advice.”(P5)*

*“I do not hesitate to ask for help, even if I am not sure to get the assistance that I want. I also try learning on my own, especially managing my time.”(P7)*

These statements highlight the proactive and resourceful approach new teachers take to overcome challenges by combining research with seeking guidance from mentors and experienced colleagues. The informants applied some coping mechanisms so they could effectively carry out their tasks. Recognizing the value of seasoned educators' insights, they set goals and manage their time based on the advice received, demonstrating a commitment to continuous learning and professional growth. This collaborative and inquisitive mindset not only aids in solving immediate problems but also fosters a supportive professional network and enhances their ability to navigate the complexities of teaching effectively. Amzat et al. (2021) agree that understanding teaching and learning, taking a positive approach, focusing on individual aspects, and having a support system are coping mechanisms used to stay in the teaching profession. In a different study, by contrast, Tammets et al. (2018) recorded that a large number of novices believed that school administrators and other teachers did not provide enough support.

## **5. Conclusion**

This study identified key themes related to the challenges and strategies faced by novice teachers in classroom management, instructional techniques, and emotional well-being. The "Classroom Management Dilemma" highlighted the

reliance on experimental methods without research-based techniques, leading to confusion, and underscored the need for better training. "Cutting-edge Instructional Techniques" showed the benefits of differentiated and technology-integrated instruction, though demanding, as essential for diverse student needs. The "Emotional and Psychological Encounters" theme revealed the stress caused by administrative duties and classroom management, emphasizing the importance of mentoring and support systems. Overall, the study stresses the need for ongoing professional development and research-based practices to support novice teachers. The administrators such as the principals had to consider managing their classrooms with ease through the experience of others and their personal experiences. Schools may focus on continuous professional development and mentorship to help novice teachers manage classrooms and support student needs effectively in the post-pandemic era.

## 6. Recommendations

1. Schools would benefit by investing in ongoing professional development programs to equip novice teachers with research-based classroom management techniques and instructional strategies.
2. Emotional and psychological support systems for both students and staff should be prioritized, ensuring a well-balanced and resilient learning environment.
3. It is suggested that the Philippine Department of Education look into the possibility of institutionalizing an induction program for beginning teachers in public schools, attending to the special requirements of beginning teachers without prior experience in the field as well as transferees from private schools and the provinces.

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