

Exploring the Roles and Challenges of Guidance Designates in The Preparation of Homeroom Guidance Programs: A Qualitative Study

¹EVELINO JR. D. MEDALLA, LPT, ²RALPH VENDEL E. MUSNI, EdD, RGC, LPT, RPm

¹La Salle Academy

²University of Science & Technology of Southern Philippines

Abstract:

This qualitative study investigates the pivotal roles and multifaceted challenges of Guidance Designates in the development and implementation of Homeroom Guidance (HG) programs in the absence of licensed guidance counselors. Rooted in Humanistic Theory, the research underscores the importance of fostering a supportive, learner-centered educational environment that nurtures the holistic development of students—socially, emotionally, and academically.

The study was conducted in a private sectarian basic education institution in Iligan City, Philippines, and involved six Guidance Designates who participated through written interviews. These individuals, typically teachers with additional responsibilities in student guidance, serve as key implementers and facilitators of HG programs in their respective schools. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis approach, allowing for a systematic identification of recurrent patterns and significant themes across responses.

Four central themes emerged from the analysis: (1) the dynamic and multidimensional roles of Guidance Designates, encompassing functions as program consultants, implementers, collaborators with teaching staff, and administrative coordinators; (2) challenges faced in addressing students' academic, personal-social, and career development needs, often exacerbated by the lack of formal training or certification; (3) influencing factors such as the availability of institutional resources, the diversity of student needs, and the Designates' intrinsic motivation; and (4) critical insights regarding the perceived relevance and redundancy of program content, as well as the need for targeted training and clearer policy direction.

The findings highlight a pressing need for systemic support structures, including capacity-building initiatives, continuous professional development, inter-stakeholder collaboration, and responsive policy reforms. Strengthening the role and institutional recognition of Guidance Designates is essential to enhance the quality, sustainability, and effectiveness of Homeroom Guidance programs, especially in educational contexts with limited access to licensed counseling professionals.

Keywords: Guidance Designate, Homeroom Guidance, qualitative research, Humanistic Theory, student development, thematic analysis, school counseling.

Introduction:

In the evolving landscape of basic education in the Philippines, the implementation of the Department of Education's Homeroom Guidance (HG) Program has become a critical component of holistic student development. Particularly in schools without licensed guidance counselors, *Guidance Designates*—teachers assigned to facilitate the delivery of the HG curriculum—play an indispensable role. These educators act as program facilitators, consultants, and technical assistants, ensuring that the psychosocial, academic, and career development needs of students are met. Their core responsibilities include organizing quarterly meetings, conducting orientations and consultations with faculty, validating learning materials, and ensuring the seamless integration of HG instruction within the school calendar (Gallatin & Olua, 2022; Pasco et al., 2023).

In the absence of formally trained and licensed guidance counselors, Guidance Designates serve as the bridge between students and the support services they need to thrive. They help actualize the developmental goals of the HG Program, which include fostering self-awareness, values formation, effective interpersonal relationships, decision-making skills, and career readiness—all of which are foundational for learners navigating adolescence and young adulthood (DepEd, 2020; Guimarães et al., 2021). Despite the critical importance of their work, a noticeable gap exists in the scholarly literature that explores the lived experiences, challenges, and support systems (or lack thereof) encountered by Guidance Designates in the field.

This study is grounded in the Humanistic Theory of Learning, which advocates for a learner-centered educational approach that emphasizes personal growth, self-actualization, and the creation of a nurturing environment that supports students' emotional, social, and academic well-being (Rogers, 1969; Bowers & Moyer, 2017). By understanding the roles, responsibilities, and contextual challenges faced by Guidance Designates—especially in private-sectarian schools in developing urban areas like Iligan City—this research aims to contribute valuable insights for enhancing the implementation and sustainability of the Homeroom Guidance Program. The findings may also inform policy development, capacity-building strategies, and institutional support mechanisms that ultimately benefit both educators and learners.

Methods

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design, specifically employing a *written interview* method to capture the rich, in-depth narratives of Guidance Designates involved in the planning and implementation of the Department of Education's Homeroom Guidance (HG) Program. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this research, as it allowed the researcher to explore the subjective experiences, perceptions, and meaning-making processes of the participants within their real-life context. Written interviews were selected to provide participants with time to reflect on their responses, leading to more thoughtful and comprehensive insights.

This design aligns with the study's objective of uncovering the nuanced challenges, coping mechanisms, and personal reflections of Guidance Designates as they perform their roles, often in the absence of licensed guidance counselors. Through this approach, the researcher was able to gather authentic data that reflected the complexity of the participants' lived experiences.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in a private sectarian school located in Iligan City, a developing urban center in Northern Mindanao, Philippines. The institution offers basic education services from kindergarten to senior high school, catering to a diverse student population. The chosen research site is representative of many similar schools in the country that operate without licensed guidance counselors and instead rely on assigned faculty members to serve as Guidance Designates. This setting provided a relevant context to explore the experiences of these individuals in fulfilling their multifaceted roles within the institution.

Participants

A total of six Guidance Designates participated in the study. The group consisted of five females and one male, all of whom were currently serving as guidance associates in their school. These participants were selected through purposive sampling, a technique commonly used in qualitative research to identify individuals who possess specific knowledge and experience related to the research topic.

The participants had varying lengths of service in their roles, which provided a diverse range of insights into the evolving nature of their work. All were actively involved in delivering the Homeroom Guidance Program, including activities such as lesson preparation, coordinating with teachers, conducting student consultations, and assessing the program. Their experiences formed the core of the data set used for thematic analysis.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a structured written interview guide designed to elicit responses from participants regarding their roles, challenges, successes, and support systems in delivering the Homeroom Guidance Program. The questions were developed based on a review of relevant literature and aligned with the study's objectives. Participants were given ample time to complete their written responses, ensuring that they could reflect on their experiences thoughtfully and uninterrupted. Follow-up clarifications were made via email when needed to ensure the accuracy and depth of the data.

Data Analysis

The responses gathered from the participants were analyzed using thematic analysis, a widely accepted method in qualitative research for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within data. The analysis followed the six-phase process outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. **Familiarization with the data** – All written responses were transcribed and thoroughly read to gain a comprehensive understanding of the content.
2. **Generating initial codes** – Key phrases, ideas, and recurring patterns were systematically coded to organize data into manageable segments.
3. **Searching for themes** – Related codes were grouped into potential themes that represented broader concepts.
4. **Reviewing themes** – Preliminary themes were checked against the data set to ensure consistency, coherence, and relevance.
5. **Defining and naming themes** – Each theme was clearly defined, and appropriate names were assigned to encapsulate their essence.
6. **Producing the report** – Themes were integrated into a narrative account supported by direct excerpts from participants to enhance the richness and credibility of the findings.

All data were analyzed manually to preserve the context and ensure a close engagement with the participants' narratives. Ethical considerations, including confidentiality and informed consent, were strictly adhered to throughout the research process.

Conclusion

This study highlights the indispensable role of *Guidance Designates* in the successful implementation of the Department of Education's Homeroom Guidance (HG) Program, particularly in schools where licensed guidance counselors are absent. These educators shoulder a broad spectrum of responsibilities—ranging from program preparation and lesson delivery to coordination

with teaching staff and direct engagement with students. Despite not having formal training in guidance and counseling, they perform their duties with dedication and adaptability, driven by a deep commitment to student development and well-being.

Findings reveal that while Guidance Designates contribute meaningfully to the emotional, social, and career development of students, their work is often challenged by structural and institutional limitations. These include a lack of formal recognition of their roles, insufficient training opportunities, limited access to updated guidance resources, and the burden of balancing HG responsibilities with their teaching and administrative tasks. Additionally, they often operate with minimal supervision or mentorship, which can lead to uncertainty in role execution and inconsistencies in program delivery.

The application of the Humanistic Theory in framing this study underscores the importance of nurturing environments and learner-centered approaches—principles that Guidance Designates strives to embody in its practice. However, their ability to implement these effectively depends significantly on the presence of enabling structures within the institution. Without clear policies, support systems, and professional development opportunities, these individuals are placed in a vulnerable position, expected to carry out crucial responsibilities without adequate preparation or support.

Thus, this study concludes that while Guidance Designates play a pivotal role in promoting the goals of the Homeroom Guidance Program, there is an urgent need to strengthen their capacities and working conditions. Investing in their professional growth and institutionalizing their contributions through clear policies and resource allocation are necessary steps to ensure the sustainability, effectiveness, and long-term impact of the Homeroom Guidance initiative in Philippine schools, especially those in private-sectarian and resource-constrained contexts such as Iligan City.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed to improve the effectiveness of Guidance Designates and ensure the continuous improvement of the Homeroom Guidance Program:

1. Professional Development and Training
 - The Department of Education (DepEd) and individual educational institutions should regularly conduct capacity-building programs, including training workshops, webinars, and certification courses, to enhance the skills and knowledge of educators. These should cover not only the technical aspects of Homeroom Guidance delivery but also essential skills in counseling, student engagement, mental health awareness, and values education.
 - A mentorship model may be introduced by linking Guidance Designates with licensed guidance counselors or experts in the field to provide continuous professional guidance.
2. Access to Updated Resources
 - Ensure that schools have timely access to updated HG lesson guides, digital modules, and reference materials. Providing a centralized online repository of tools and best practices can help Guidance Designates stay informed and aligned with current standards and trends in student development and guidance practices.
3. Policy Refinement and Role Clarification
 - The Department of Education (DepEd) and school administrations must institutionalize the role of Guidance Designates by clearly defining their scope of work, required competencies, and allowable workloads. This includes revisiting current policies to protect these educators from excessive multitasking that may compromise the quality of their teaching and learning.
 - Incorporating the Guidance Designate role into school improvement plans and institutional development goals would promote better integration and accountability.
4. Stakeholder Engagement and Whole-School Approach
 - Strengthen collaboration between Guidance Designates and key stakeholders—including school administrators, parents, classroom advisers, and subject teachers—to promote a whole-school approach in supporting students' socio-emotional and career development. This may involve shared planning, case conferencing, or team-based implementation of student support initiatives.
5. Recognition and Support Systems
 - Establish formal recognition systems for exemplary Guidance Designates to boost morale and affirm the significance of their contribution to student success. Providing allowances, reduced teaching loads, or awards can serve as both motivation and acknowledgment of their efforts.
 - Institutions should also ensure that psychosocial support mechanisms are in place for Guidance Designates themselves, who are often emotionally burdened by their roles.

By implementing these recommendations, schools and educational agencies can ensure that Guidance Designates are not only equipped to fulfill their roles effectively but are also supported as integral contributors to the holistic development of Filipino learners.

References

1. Abubakar, A. (2019). Career guidance program in schools division office of Pangasinan II. *Scimatic Journal*, 10(1), 1–7.

2. Aguilar-Ramat, G. (2022). Extent of implementation of the guidance program in the public schools of Urdaneta City. *International Journal of Advanced Multidisciplinary Studies*, 7(7), 275–301.
3. American School Counselor Association. (2019). *The essential role of high school counselors*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
4. American School Counselor Association. (2019). *ASCA National Model: A framework for school counseling programs* (4th ed.). Alexandria, VA: Author.
5. Arslan, G., & Wong, P. T. P. (2022). Measuring personal and social responsibility: An existential positive psychology approach. *Journal of Happiness and Health*, 2(1), 1–11.
6. Aquino, B. (2013). Message of President Aquino to the Philippine Guidance and Counseling Association Inc. on the occasion of their 49th Annual National Convention. President's Office.
7. Barcelona, W. (2023, May 17). School-based mental health program bill reaches Senate plenary. *Philippine News Agency*.
8. Bhandari, P. (2023). What is quantitative research? Definition, uses, and methods. Scribbr.
9. Bowers, A. A., & Moyer, A. (2017). The role of school counselors in student development: A framework for practice. *Journal of School Counseling*, 15(2), 1–20.
10. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
11. Carey, J., & Dimmitt, C. (2012). Student success and comprehensive guidance programs. *Journal of School Counseling*, 10(5), 100–120.
12. Cervantes, A., Aclan, E., Marticio, F. P., & Gumarao, M. (2019). Lived experiences of guidance facilitators who take the role of guidance counselors in the Philippines. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 11(2), 50–68.
13. Clemeña, R. (2010). Developing national standards for school counseling in the Philippines. Philippine Guidance Association.
14. DepEd. (2020). *Policy guidelines on the implementation of the homeroom guidance program*. Department of Education Philippines.
15. DepEd. (2021). DepEd revised implementation of Homeroom Guidance for School Year 2021–2022. *TeacherPH*.
16. Dionaldo, V. (2022). Assessment of guidance services implemented by secondary schools in General Santos City, Philippines. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 11(2), 161–178.
17. Doukakis, S. (2021). A management approach of an e-tutoring program for high school students. *ArXiv*.
18. Fabito, B. S., Trillanes, A. O., & Sarmiento, J. R. (2020). Barriers and challenges of computing students in an online learning environment: Philippines. *ArXiv*.
19. Gallatin, M., & Olua, A. (2022). Perceived roles and challenges of guidance designates in schools. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Academy*, 12(3), 45–55.
20. Geiger, S. N., & Oehrtman, J. P. (2020). School counselors and the school leadership team. *Professional School Counseling*, 23(1_part_3), Article 2156759X2090566.
21. Gerstein, J. (2013). Photography for enhancing social-emotional learning. *UserGeneratedEducation*.
22. Gielgun-Katz, A., Rusu, A., & Shacham, M. (2023). Photography-Based Pedagogy about Social-Emotional Learning in Adolescents – Systematic Literature Review. *Educatia21*, 128–136.
23. Gullo, D. F. (2013). Improving instructional practices through data-driven decision-making. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 41(6), 413–421.
24. Guimarães, M., Tan, E., & Lee, Y. (2021). Cultural sensitivity in educational settings: Implications for student engagement. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 113(4), 617–628.
25. Halwani, F., & Geha, M. (2022). Mindfulness-Based SEL program in Lebanese private school. *International Journal of Science and Research*.
26. Harrison, M., King, R., & Hocson, S. (2023). The roles of school counselors in the Philippines: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Psychologists and Counsellors in Schools*, 33(2), 161–174. <https://doi.org/10.1017/jgc.2023.4>
27. Humphrey, N., Kalambouka, A., Wigelsworth, M., & Lendrum, A. (2010). Going for Goals: Evaluation of a SEL intervention. *School Psychology International*, 31(3), 250–270.
28. Johnson, D., & Johnson, R. (2018). Cooperative learning: The foundation for active learning. EdTech Publications.
29. Kampen, M. (2021). 25 SEL activities and how they promote student well-being. Prodigy Game Blog.
30. Landingin, S. L., Cuevas, R. C., Capillo, A. C., Giente, S. M., & Tamon, C.-J. (2020). Assessment of the role of the guidance department to avoid cutting classes. *Bestlink College Journal of Multidisciplinary Research*.
31. Lagon, H. M. L., Alobba, E. O., Janeo, J. T., Florendo, N. T., Aurecencia, L. S. Z., Mavinta, J. R. O., ... Alberto, J. T. C. G. (2023). Development of a comprehensive guidance and counseling program for junior high school in Iloilo. *American Journal of Education and Technology*, 1(4), 24–27. <https://doi.org/10.54536/ajet.v1i4.677>
32. Lent, R. W., Hill, C. E., & Hoffman, M. A. (2003). Counselor Activity Self-Efficacy Scales. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50(1), 97–108.
33. Lumasag, J. M., Talirongan, H. T., Talirongan, F. J. B., & Labanza, C. L. (2021). Data-driven decision support on student behavior using fuzzy approach. *ArXiv*.

34. Maestrado, J. T., & Bucar, J. D. (2024). Career guidance advocacy program and Grade 10 completers' career choice. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Applied Business and Education Research*, 5(2), 513–527. <https://doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.05.02.12>
35. Maguire, M., & Brid, D. (2017). Experiences of guidance designates in guidance services. *International Journal of Research and Analytical Reviews*, 4(2), 100–109.
36. Mendoza, M. (2003). Homeroom Guidance as part of guidance services. Department of Education Operational Memo.
37. Mckay, D. R. (2020). Career development: What is it? The Balance Careers.
38. Mercado, J. (2020). Homeroom guidance during a crisis. DepEd Mandaluyong Memo.
39. Nyutu, P. (2007). Development of Student Counseling Needs Scale. *CORE.ac.uk*.
40. Pasco, M. A., Balacuit, K. R., & Navarro, J. P. (2023). The readiness of guidance designates the implementation of homeroom guidance. *Cognizance Journal of Counseling*, 9(1), 12–21.
41. Perusse, R., Goodnough, G. E., Donegan, J., & Jones, C. (2004). Perceptions of school counselors on national standards. *Professional School Counseling*, 7, 152–161.
42. Pham, A. K., & Akos, P. (2020). Professional school counseling in public schools in Vietnam. *Journal of Asia Pacific Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 10, 171–187.
43. Rahman, A. M. A., Isa, N., & Atan, A. (2013). Guidance and Counseling Model in Malaysian Schools. *International Journal of Education and Research*, 1, 1–12.
44. Rogers, K. L. (2019). Program development for African American men: An existential-humanistic approach. Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School.
45. Rumsey, A. D., & Milsom, A. (2019). Supporting school engagement through trauma-informed counseling. *Professional School Counseling*, 22(1), 2156759X19867254.
46. Ryan, R. M., Deci, E. L., Vansteenkiste, M., & Soenens, B. (2021). Building a science of motivated persons: Self-determination theory. *Motivation Science*, 7(2), 97.
47. See, C. M., & Ng, K. M. (2010). Counseling in Malaysia: History, status, future. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 88, 18–22.
48. Strear, M., Duffy, H., & Sunde, A. (2021). When schools go dark, counselors shine: pandemic response—*American Institutes for Research Brief*.
49. Thanomton, C., Niyamabha, A., Wichitputchraporn, W., & Koedsuwan, S. (2018). Transformational leadership and teacher engagement in BMA schools. *PSAKU International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research*, 7(2).
50. Ushiyama, K. (2019). The role of guidance counselors in schools: A critical review. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(3), 340–353.