



## A Responsive Internship Program from the Viewpoint of Beginning Teachers

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**Abstract**— The final semester of a four-year education course involves a student teaching or internship period that poses a number of challenges to cooperating teachers, college supervisors, student teachers, and school administrators, among other stakeholders. This stage connects the theoretical and practical in real-world learning environments, acting as a pillar in the professional development of future educators. A seamless transition from theory to practice is made possible by responsive internship programs that integrate classroom experiences with pre-service training in response to evolving educational demands. This study explores the perspectives and experiences of pre-service teachers in internship programs using a qualitative phenomenological approach. Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders in Visayas, Philippines provide priceless information about program effectiveness and areas for improvement. Important issues come to light, highlighting the need of preparing teacher interns with flexible abilities, incorporating technology, learner-centered approaches, encouraging cooperation between organizations and educational institutions, and professionalism. Experiential learning and exposure to a range of student populations are essential for refining instructional strategies and fostering professional development. The study provides valuable information that may be utilized to improve internship programs, which in turn helps to foster the professional growth of new teachers and improves students' educational achievement.

**Keywords**—Beginning Teachers, Learner Centered, Reflective Teaching

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Student Teaching or Internship, the practicum for education students offered in the last semester of the four-year education course poses many challenges for both student teachers, College supervisors, cooperating teachers and school heads from cooperating schools. The internship experience is essential in determining how starting teachers develop professionally. The alignment between teacher training programs and the changing needs of educational contexts is emphasized by a responsive internship program. The importance of internship programs in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and practical application has long been acknowledged (Hobson et al., 2009; Taylor et al., 2015). Beginning teachers can put their theoretical knowledge into practice, hone their pedagogical abilities, and adjust to the challenges of real teaching through the use of a responsive internship program (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). A responsive internship program assists starting teachers in making a seamless transition from theory to practice by coordinating classroom experiences with pre-service preparation.

Professional development is greatly aided by internship programs that place a strong emphasis on being attentive to the needs of starting teachers. Pre-service teachers receive practical experience in lesson preparation, instruction delivery, and classroom management through active participation in the learning environment (Taylor et al., 2015). Beginning teachers build a repertoire of effective teaching tactics and hone their instructional techniques by actively participating in teaching and receiving mentoring and criticism from seasoned educators (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). These opportunities for experiential learning promote their competence, confidence, and overall professional growth.

Beginning teachers must collaborate and encourage one another in order to succeed and be happy, therefore a responsive internship program is essential (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Beginning instructors can learn from each other, solve problems together, and share information through collaborative experiences. They can examine their teaching methods, investigate cutting-edge ideas, and gain knowledge from the many viewpoints of their colleagues by participating in collaborative activities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). During the difficult early phases of their teaching profession, this

collaborative setting helps build a strong support network, minimizing feelings of isolation and improving resilience.

The many requirements of beginning teachers are acknowledged by and attended to via a responsive internship program. The program ensures tailored learning opportunities by customizing internship experiences to individual skills, interests, and cultural backgrounds (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The program can offer focused assistance, mentoring, and resources to aid each beginning teacher's development in the areas that are most important to them, taking into account their particular professional goals. This customization promotes the effectiveness of the internship experience and helps beginning teachers grow personally and be satisfied.

According to Hobson et al. (2009) and Taylor et al. (2015), efficient internship programs are essential in bridging the gap between academic knowledge and actual teaching abilities. Traditionally, internships have been designed to give aspiring teachers the chance to observe in the classroom and take on a few light teaching duties. Recent studies have nonetheless emphasized the value of internships that are responsive to the requirements of beginning teachers, their students, and the changing educational landscape. As suggested in John et al. (2023), educational institutions concerned must institutionalize internship programs by instituting policies and programs to ensure best practices.

Several essential components that support the professional development of starting teachers are included in a responsive internship program. First of all, it ought to give priority to immersive experiences that let future teachers actively participate in the classroom (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). They can learn instructional approaches, classroom management strategies, and teaching strategies through this practical approach while working with supportive mentors (Taylor et al., 2015).

Second, a flexible internship program ought to encourage beginning teachers to work together and support one another. According to research, providing opportunities for peer learning and collaborative problem-solving can improve professional growth (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Beginning teachers can share challenges, receive criticism, and exchange ideas through collaborative experiences, which encourage reflective practice and a growth mindset (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Thirdly, a flexible internship program should take into account the various demands of beginning teachers, taking into account things like their unique

talents, passions, and cultural backgrounds (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The program may address each teacher's unique professional goals and offer a more individualized learning experience by customizing the internship experience to match their needs.

One key benefit of a responsive internship program is its ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice. According to Hobson et al. (2009), internship opportunities give beginning teachers beneficial chances to put their theoretical knowledge to use in real-world classroom situations. Beginning teachers can learn useful skills and tactics that are in line with their pre-service training by actively participating in teaching, observing, and reflecting.

A responsive internship program has many benefits that advance their professional growth. Such a program helps beginning teachers transition from pre-service training to classroom practice by bridging the theory-practice gap, supporting professional growth, encouraging cooperation and support, and offering tailored learning experiences. The implementation of a responsive internship program can have a significant positive impact on educational stakeholders, such as policymakers and stakeholders in the educational system, as well as new teachers themselves, resulting in more effective and prosperous teaching careers.

Moreover, a responsive internship program also promotes a friendly, cooperative learning atmosphere. Darling-Hammond et al. (2017) contend that working together can improve the professional development of beginning teachers. Peer conversations, resource sharing, and cooperative problem solving all help teachers create successful teaching methods and increase their pedagogical knowledge. Beginning teachers benefit from having a solid support system thanks to the collaborative nature of responsive internship programs (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

Additionally, personalization within a responsive internship program is important to meeting the diverse needs of beginning teachers. The necessity of customizing internship programs to account for individual abilities, interests, and cultural backgrounds is emphasized by Ingersoll and Strong (2011). Such personalization enables beginning teachers to concentrate on development areas that are most pertinent to their teaching goals, increasing satisfaction and motivation.

Furthermore, several research suggests that a responsive internship program can contribute to the professional growth and retention of beginning

teachers. According to Taylor et al. (2015), effective teaching practices and classroom management abilities are developed more quickly when active participation in the learning environment is combined with mentoring and feedback from seasoned teachers. Beginning teachers' self-efficacy and confidence are boosted by these experiences, which ultimately increases their propensity to stay in the teaching field.

In the Philippine context, Teaching Internship serves as the culmination of pre-service professional training for beginning teachers as stipulated in Commission on Higher Education Memorandum Order No. 104, s. 2017. It enables pre-service teachers to improve their pedagogical, technological, and content knowledge through real-world application of the theories they learned throughout the teacher education program (Cadosales et al., 2021). Despite its implementation, it still hangs around whether the teacher interns are satisfied with the duration, learning environment, and quality of experiences they had. Hence, a further examination on this aspect is necessary.

Hence, this study intends to gather challenges met by student teachers, college supervisors, cooperating teachers, and school heads from cooperating schools, and their proposed solutions to such challenges. This study also aims to offer insightful recommendations for improving internship programs to better facilitate the transition from pre-service training to classroom practice by examining the experiences and views of these beginning teachers. The research results will guide the establishment and improvement of internship programs that successfully foster the professional development of beginning teachers as well as their transition from pre-service education to classroom instruction.

This study explores the experiences, challenges, and growth opportunities encountered by beginning teachers during their participation in internship programs, aiming to inform improvements in teacher preparation and support initiatives.

## II. METHOD

A qualitative Phenomenological design was used in this study to record the perceptions and experiences of beginning teachers taking part in an internship program. To learn about their opinions of the program, the difficulties they have encountered, and the help they have received, semi-structured interviews was done among the Teacher Interns of selected colleges and universities in the Visayas, Philippines. In total, the researchers randomly collated the data from 50 teacher interns and 20 colleges supervisor and mentors to triangulate the data gathered. To ensure a diverse group of participants, representing various educational areas and geographic locations, a purposive sampling technique was used. Focus group discussion was conducted online using different platforms. The data were analyzed using Clarke and Braun (2017) analysis method which focuses on “identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns and themes within the qualitative data.”

The study was purely academics with involve the beginning teachers in higher education institutions. Since this study does not involve a vulnerable population and there are no sensitive topics to be asked, the researchers apply for exemption of review from the Research Ethics Committee. However, the researchers still ensure that the basic ethical considerations will still be followed to like asking for the statement of consent from the participants, voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality, and withdrawal from the study at any time if they feel of doing so. Moreover, token and refreshments were given to the participants of the study.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

After the data were transcribed and coded, the following themes and sub-themes emerged from the study.

Main Themes	Sub-themes
<b>Equipping teaching skills to beginning Teachers</b>	<i>Adapting to Diverse Learning Styles and Abilities</i> <i>Integrating Technology and Engaging Strategies</i>
<b>Learner-Centered Instruction and Flexibility</b>	<i>Building Connections Beyond the Classroom</i> <i>Mutual Respect Beyond School Boundaries</i>

<b>Reflective Teaching and Continuous Improvement</b>	<i>Collaboration Between Institutions and Schools</i> <i>Internship Program Improvements and Continuous Support</i>
<b>Importance of Practical Experience and Classroom Exposure</b>	<i>Exposure to Diverse Student Populations</i> <i>Application of Teaching Techniques and Lesson Planning</i>
<b>Emphasis on Mental Health, Professionalism and Ethics</b>	<i>Real Worlds Challenges and Coping Strategies</i>

### Theme 1: Equipping teaching skills to beginning Teachers

One of the most important things for the beginning teachers ready for the demands of the classroom is to give them teaching skills. As they move from the theoretical knowledge they acquired in teacher education programs to the practical application of teaching in actual classroom situations, new teachers frequently encounter a challenging learning curve. It is important to offer thorough training that covers numerous facets of pedagogy, classroom management, subject matter expertise, and professional development to properly prepare new teachers with the required abilities. Some of their narratives are:

*"Feedback loops between institutions and schools can inform program improvements." (TI 2)*

*"They must help one another so that they will achieve their goals." (TI 24)*

*"Higher education institutions and cooperating schools can better collaborate to ensure beginning teachers are equipped with content knowledge, pedagogical, and technological skills." (TI 10)*

*"Through internship, I developed my teaching skills." (TI17)*

*"I think I became a better teacher because I also discovered new teaching skills." (TI8)*

Effective teaching is built on a foundation of pedagogical abilities. To meet the unique needs of their students, new instructors must possess a variety of teaching tactics, evaluation tools, and differentiation techniques (Brown, 2016). New teachers can give their students interesting and relevant learning experiences

by putting a heavy emphasis on developing their pedagogical abilities. It has demonstrated its efficacy in the classroom and helped pupils develop their analytical and critical thinking skills (Belen & Caballes, 2020). It has been mentioned for decades as a crucial component of science instruction. The goal of education is to help students better understand the many underlying scientific concepts and processes, so they are encouraged to employ a variety of analytical and cognitive skills.

The theme implies that beginning teachers must be well-exposed to pedagogical, technological, and content knowledge to ensure that they are better prepared for the field of teaching once they become full-fledged teachers. For Cabiles (2022), if teachers are not properly trained and supported, those may drive them out of the teaching profession faster. As articulated by John et al. (2023), one of the best predictors to improve teacher interns' pedagogical skills and eventually boost their performance is through effective internship programs.

Sometimes, teacher interns may experience teaching shock when first immersed in the teaching profession (Aarts, 2020). However, when exposed to actual teaching experience, the teacher interns become responsible for students' learning. They are also expected to collaborate, communicate, relate with students, and develop personal identities (Aarts, 2020).

Also, pre-service teachers must collaborate to harness their skills to better teach their learners. Feedback will also be important to ensure that these pre-service teachers can reflect on their own learning to harness their skills. To continuously thrive in the teaching profession, teachers must continuously adapt, possess positive behavior, and endure the challenges of the profession (Cabiles, 2022).

Teacher mentors and college supervisors must ensure that the pre-service teachers are well-monitored and supported to better perform as future teachers. Lack of effective internship mentors and negative experiences can drive away the teacher interns from the profession. Effective mentorship and internship programs can better prepare teacher interns for the profession (Zhu et al., 2020).

### **Sub-theme 1.1: Adapting to Diverse Learning Styles and Abilities**

Support and mentoring are essential in giving new teachers the tools they need to be successful. To assist new teachers in overcoming the obstacles of the teaching profession, seasoned educators can offer direction, criticism, and emotional support. It

should be the goal of mentoring programs to match aspiring educators with seasoned mentors who can provide insightful guidance. There is an evidence that the pre-service teachers considered the diverse learning styles and abilities of the students as evident in their narratives:

*"I learned that in teaching it should be a two-way process. The teacher can learn from the students as well."* (TI2, TI5)

*"As a future teacher, I can apply these principles by adapting lessons to provide to various learning styles and abilities."* (TI6)

*"Throughout the internship program, I acquired a strong foundation in pedagogical knowledge, incorporating diverse instructional strategies and honing essential classroom management skills."* (TI11)

This implies the notion that teaching involves a mutually beneficial interaction in which both the teacher and the student can learn from one another in addition to the traditional emphasis on knowledge transfer. This highlights how crucial it is to provide a participatory, team-based learning environment where students are encouraged to share their knowledge and experiences. By giving students interactive activities, students can stimulate learning and teach them to work independently with excitement (Malikovna et al, 2022). The social cognitive approach, cognitive information processing, cognitive constructivism, and social constructivism are the four basic cognitive approaches to learning, according to Santrock (2001) as cited in Luan and Bakar (2008). The interplay of behavior, environment, and person (cognitive) as determinants to impact the learning process is highlighted by the social cognitive approach. Students possess different styles and abilities (Aristuti & Wahyudin, 2022). They also have their preferences in learning. Students' diverse learning styles have an impact on how they learn, how they communicate, and how they process information. The learning styles indicate the speed and way they absorb information (Damayanti et al., 2022).

The responses of the participants further suggest that they must continuously apply various teaching styles to better address the diverse needs of the learners. They are immersed in teaching internship to be exposed to the realities in the field. It there in teaching that these teacher-interns are exposed to various experiences within and outside the typical

classroom setting to better prepare them for the teaching challenges. These enabled one of the participants to “acquire a strong foundation in pedagogical knowledge” to improve his/her classroom management, which is crucial to succeed as a teacher. Having strong classroom management can make the teacher more successful in delivering his/her lesson with less interruption. Interest in learning can improve students’ attention and outcomes (Sutarto et al., 2020).

### **Sub-theme 1.2: Integrating Technology and Engaging Strategies**

Teacher beliefs, knowledge, and self-efficacy in relation to transformative technology integration are internal characteristics that teacher education programs have the ability to significantly influence, even while they may have little to no effect on school-based external determinants (Paratore et al., 2016). As a result, they not only have the chance, but also the duty, to comprehend, design, and execute a curriculum that will equip pre-service teachers (PSTs) with the necessary tools for success in schools with sufficient funding. Below are the narratives of the pre-service teachers:

*"I plan to use these learnings in the future by incorporating technology to make lessons fun and engaging." (TI 10)*

*"The integration of active learning in the classroom succor me, as a pre-service teacher, to utilize as a foundation to have a conducive learning environment." (TI 19)*

*"I've learned that it's really effective when you conduct a very interactive lesson or a topic that needs to be creative and strategize some methods that students will engage in participating in." (TI 7)*

In order to immerse students in the learning process, active learning calls on them to actively examine, synthesize, and apply knowledge. Teachers can establish a dynamic and engaging learning environment that promotes student participation and deeper knowledge by implementing active learning practices. For Pedler et al. (2020), teachers’ and students’ meaningful engagements play important roles in strengthening their relationships which can better shape students’ motivations and learning. This statement acknowledges that active learning is a fundamental component of creating a favorable learning environment, which is necessary for efficient instruction and learning objectives. By

providing active learning, the roles of the teacher as facilitator are reinforced which is necessary to effective and efficient teachers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It appears that the pre-service teachers understood during their internship that providing engaging strategies do not just motivate learners to make them more engaged and interested, but also to deepen the lesson in more meaningful and exciting ways.

As one teacher intern commented, *“I plan to use these learnings in the future by incorporating technology to make lessons fun and engaging.”* This further indicates that the teacher produced by higher education institutions already understand the importance of technology to teaching and learning. Educational institutions are now empowering teacher to use technology in teaching and learning (Jamon et al., 2021). From the view of Akram et al. (2022), teacher interns’ technology use can also have a strong association with how they view teaching and learning. Also, the maximization of technology can help both teachers and learners’ access, select, establish, and interpret information. Its effective use can meet students’ educational needs (Akram et al., 2022).

### **Theme 2: Learner-Centered Instruction and Flexibility**

Student participation is a hallmark of Learner-Centered Teaching (LCT), which raises engagement and improves learning outcomes. Under the LCT approach, teachers determine the best teaching strategies for each student by evaluating each one's learning preferences, pace, abilities, needs, and learning objectives according to Kumar (2020) as cited in Tzenios (2022). Because LCT involves students in real-world problems, it enriches their learning experiences holistically. It is imperative that inter-professional education be incorporated into LCT because it gives students the kind of collaboration and teamwork skills that are invaluable in the workplace. Below are the narratives of the participants:

*"I learned about learner-centered instructional strategies during my internship." (T1)*

*"I believe in creating a student-centered learning environment that caters to diverse learning needs." (TI10)*

*"The most challenging experiences during the internship program involved managing classroom conduct and developing teachings for different learners." (TI2, TI 12)*

This implies that creating a disciplined and encouraging learning atmosphere where students feel valued and inspired is essential to controlling behavior in the classroom. Creating lessons for a variety of

students also calls for careful planning and modification of instructional tactics to accommodate a range of learning preferences, aptitudes, and interests. Effective classroom management techniques, pedagogical adaptability, and a thorough awareness of each student's unique needs are necessary to overcome these obstacles. Learner-Centered Teaching improves students' engagement. It develops students' interest in the subject (Tzenios, 2022). However, implementing Learner-Centered Teaching is a challenging task for a teacher (An & Miranda, 2020).

Moreover, it is a relief on the part of the higher education institutions that they are setting in the right direction since these pre-service teachers are leaning towards the learner-centered teaching. This further means that the future teachers produced by the higher education institutions will eventually be competent facilitators of learning for they understood that learner-centered teaching is necessary to ensure that more learning will happen and learners become part of the teaching-learning process. As Emery et al. (2021) noted, teachers are greatly influenced by their experiences, interactions, and professional development.

### **Sub-theme 2.1: Building Connections Beyond the Classroom**

Instead of the more passive role that has traditionally been adopted, learner-centered teaching challenges students to take an active part in their education (Darsih, 2018). The learner-centered approach encouraged deeper learning and helped pupils become more self-sufficient in other subjects. Below are their narratives:

*"Building positive relationships with students to create an effective classroom community matters a lot." (TI 8)*

*"I always observe the weaknesses of the students so that I can control the whole class by that the learners will listen and participate in the teacher." (TI 10)*

*"You must listen to the student so that the student will also listen to you." (TI 14)*

*"My students respect me because I established a strong connection with them. I also constantly conduct follow up online their submissions because I care for their grades." (TI47)*

Within the classroom community, there is a

sense of trust, respect, and belonging when teachers and students have real ties. These kinds of connections make it easier for people to collaborate, communicate openly, and offer support—all of which are critical for increasing student motivation, engagement, and academic achievement. Teachers may foster a supportive, inclusive classroom environment where students feel appreciated, understood, and empowered by placing a high priority on developing relationships. Previous studies show that successful teachers value their relationship with their students. However, these teachers may face frustrations, disappointments, and challenges (Miller, 2022). During the pandemic, a sense of belongingness in classrooms were greatly missed (Tice et al., 2021). The present situation enables the teacher to better interact and establish connection with their students than during the pandemic.

Furthermore, the pre-service teachers valued the connection and relationships with their learners to better engage with them. Knowing them personally and listening to them can improve teacher-learner relationship which are important to win their hearts to teach them better. Human beings value relationships, making us social creatures. Providing students with positive emotions can have a huge impact on teaching and learning (Frenzel et al., 2021).

### **Sub-theme 2.2: Mutual Respect Beyond School Boundaries**

Respect and a sense of validation are fostered when teachers genuinely listen to the opinions, worries, and criticism of their students. Students are more inclined to respond in kind by participating in the learning process and paying close attention to their teachers. Teachers may establish a learning environment where students feel valued and empowered to actively participate in their own education by cultivating a culture of mutual respect and communication. Below are their stories:

*"Most meaningful experience was when they greet and show their respect even when we meet outside the school." (TI14)*

*"The most meaningful experiences during the internship program included building relationships with students, witnessing their growth..." (TI2)*

*"I ensure that I always show respect to them so that they will respect me too. Respect begets respect." (TI29)*

This means that building relationships, being aware of students' strengths and limitations, and

encouraging open communication are all important ways for teachers to create a classroom environment in which each student feels appreciated, inspired, and equipped to achieve. Teachers treat their students in a variety of ways depending on their expectations, experiences, and personal beliefs. Effective feedback on students can indicate high expectations and concern for them (Denessen et al., 2020).

When teachers are respected, learners know how to set boundaries for their teachers. The pre-service teachers appeared to have realized that they had already built relationships with their learners as they taught them. Building connections with students and establishing mutual respect can provide favorable student achievement (Frymier & House 2000, as cited in Pishghadam, 2023). From the point of view of Pitzer and Skinner (2017) as cited in Shen and Guo (2022), teachers who care for their learners address their academic needs and help them hurdle the learning challenges.

Previous studies also show that there is a favorable connection between teachers' respect and students' level of persistence and effort (Pitzer & Skinner, 2000 as cited in Shen & Guo, 2022).

### **Theme 3: Reflective Teaching and Continuous Improvement**

The pre-service teachers learned throughout their teaching internship that they were able to navigate the challenges by reflecting on their learning and by continuously improving themselves. These are evident in their responses:

*"I plan to use these strategies, styles, and learnings, in the future, I would apply the learnings that I have encountered during my practicum journey." (TI3)*

*"I aim to leverage these skills and knowledge to create a stimulating and inclusive classroom where every student has the opportunity to thrive academically and socially." (TI 8; TI20)*

*"So far our topic together with our mentor if you don't get it." (TI13)*

*"I find meaningful experiences in hands-on teaching opportunities, collaborating with experienced educators, and receiving constructive feedback." (TI 4)*

*"The most important advice given by her was to emphasize the importance of establishing a supportive and respectful classroom environment where students feel valued and motivated to learn." (TI 29, TI 31)*

The stories all center around the idea of lifelong learning and career advancement. The data

imply that educators must keep current, be flexible, and pursue lifelong learning. Similarly, from the study of Ahmad et al. (2013) as mentioned in Orakci (2021), reflective teaching practices can impact teachers' pedagogical skills. Reflective teachers are creative and effective.

For the interns, applying what they learned from the feedback and first-hand experiences and mentoring can better foster an inclusive learning environment. By being open to constructive feedback, a teacher has always room for improvement which enable him/her to continuously grow professionally. These interns were guided and supported by mentors to harness their pedagogical, technological, and content knowledge which will be useful to them as they practice the profession. Orakci (2021) suggested to organize more training activities for teachers relative to reflective teaching to ensure their continuous growth as a person and professional.

Consequently, teachers who reflect from on their own learning are those who excel and can outperform others for they always transform to be the better version of themselves. Having an open mind can expand the possibilities for the teachers to improve their practices. Colomer et al. (2020) interjected that teachers who reflect on their own experiences, knowledge acquired, and evaluate their actions are those who continuously grow professionally. With this, they can correct their previous mistakes to better improve their practices. By constantly contemplating, teachers can become aware that they must always transform for the better (Colomer et al., 2020).

#### **Sub-theme 3.1: Collaboration Between Institutions and Schools**

Teacher interns believe that higher education institutions and cooperating schools can foster collaboration to better prepare teacher interns for the field of teaching. These are their narratives:

*"Collaboration between higher education institutions and cooperating schools can be enhanced through joint curriculum development, shared resources, and regular communication." (TI 15, TI 2)*

*"By fostering closer collaboration between higher education institutions and cooperating schools, beginning teachers can receive a more holistic and practical preparation." (TI 4, TI 9)*

The responses imply that by working hand in hand, the higher education institutions and cooperating private and public schools can provide a "more holistic and practical preparation" to the teacher interns. Collaboration among institutions is essential to ensure

that the teachers that the higher education institutions are producing are well-equipped to meet the demands in the field. By doing so, improved teaching internship programs can happen resulting in symbiotic relationship among those institutions of learning. Through continuous collaboration among important stakeholders, schools can better pursue its goals. When schools and stakeholders work hand in hand, programs, such as internship can definitely become more successful (Cruzat et al., 2022).

If quality teachers are produced in higher institutions of learning, quality teachers will eventually emerge. Better preparation for pre-service teachers will eventually benefit the future generations. Tuasikal et al. (2021) pointed out that effective partnerships between schools and institutions that offer education courses can significantly give teacher interns opportunities to effectively manage classes. In reality, schools cannot survive without partnerships with key stakeholders (Sulthani & Thoifah, 2022).

### **Sub-theme 3.2: Internship Program Improvements and Continuous Support**

Teaching internship programs must be continuously improved to better prepare the pre-service teachers. These are suggested by the teacher intern through the following responses.

*"Feedback loops between institutions and schools can inform program improvements." (TI 30)*

*"They must be one and help one another so that they will achieve their goals." (TI 3)*

*"To strengthen internship programs, higher education institutions could foster closer partnerships with schools..."(TI 8, TI 18)*

*"Learning from challenges faced during the internship can also help in becoming a resilient and adaptable educator." (TI 22)*

The responses from the pre-service teachers suggest that more is still to be done to better prepare them for their teaching journey. Ramadhani and Rahanayu (2020) suggested that in order to improve teaching internship programs, appreciation or incentives may be given to the cooperating teachers to motivate them to continuously mentor the teacher interns. As mentioned in Ahmed et al. (2020) as cited in Cadosales et al. (2021), part of the support that educational institutions can give to teacher interns is to provide them various learning opportunities to help them become effective educators.

The institutions of learning must help one another to produce quality teachers. Furthermore, they may establish feedback mechanisms to ensure that they are both gearing towards the same direction. Hence, achieving their goals to train competent teachers who are future proof- who can be able to survive the challenges of the future of teaching and learning.

### **Theme 4: Importance of Practical Experience and Classroom Exposure**

Teacher interns consider their experiences meaningful during teaching internships for it provided them first-hand experiences and exposure to the realities in the field. These are some of their stories.

*"The most meaningful experiences I had were the ones inside the classroom." (TI 21)*

*"We do not only learn from our experiences but also from our fellow interns and from our mentor..." (TI 6)*

*"Provide opportunities for beginning teachers to gain hands-on experience in real classroom settings." (TI 9)*

From the narratives of teacher interns, they gained real-life experiences of being a teacher through the teaching internship program. Teaching internship gives teacher interns opportunities to apply the theories they learned inside the classroom (Cadosales et al., 2020). This suggests that the internship program is essential to better prepare future teachers to the teaching world. It is essential that before a teacher is hired for, the school shall ensure that the prospective teacher undergo teaching a internship. This will enable schools to ensure that the teachers they are hiring have at least a background knowledge in handling learners, managing classrooms, preparing necessary instructional materials, and thinking of effective teaching pedagogies to improve instruction.

Through teaching internship, teacher interns do not just gain experience but have the continuous opportunity to reflect on their experiences to improve their teaching practices. Thus, higher education institutions must ensure that their teacher interns are exposed to different learning opportunities to better prepare them to be effective and efficient teachers. During the pandemic, teachers were exposed to online and remote teaching which they were not used to (Jamon et al., 2021). On the brighter side, when teachers are again exposed to actual teaching experience, they tend to be more satisfied with their work (Topchyan & Woehler, 2021). This tends to be the similar experiences of the teacher interns. Moreover, Topchyan et al. (2021) underscored that teachers' job satisfaction is significantly related to

learners' discipline, colleague cooperation, and workload. In the study of Graham et al. (2020), teachers who have 0-3 teaching experiences appear to be constant throughout the period however evidence shows that the quality of teaching starts to decline through 4-5 years of teaching. As teachers gain experience, they tend to perform better in terms of classroom management compared to the beginning teachers.

#### **Theme 4.1: Exposure to Diverse Student Populations**

The classroom consists of diverse learners with different learners from different walks of life. It is a practice in the Philippine context to immerse teacher interns in the laboratory school or in public and private schools for them to first practice the profession for several months. This enabled teacher interns to be exposed to diverse learners. Below are their narratives.

*"When I was assigned to the public school, I met all sorts of learners from different walks of life. In fact, there are learners who come from the poorest family, who cannot even afford to buy their snacks." (IT21)*

*"Some of my students are bullied inside and outside the school, while some are victims of domestic abuse." (TI11)*

*"There are students who are always absent because they have to work. I just keep on motivating them to finish their studies." (TI8)*

*"My mentor told me to know first my students better for me to understand them." (TI5)*

Based on the experience of the teacher interns, they met different kinds of learners throughout their teaching internship. Yin et al. (2020) opined, that one of the most important roles of the teachers is to address the diverse needs of their learners. In order to effectively manage classes, the teachers shall abandon the thought that there is a one-size-fits-all approach in managing classes. Instead, they must address learners' differences. Teachers who are aware of the learners' learning styles is helpful in addressing their preferences (Yin et al., 2020). Accepting learners' diversity can contribute positively to learners' achievement and engagement (Djurayeva & Djuraev, 2024).

This suggests that these teacher interns were exposed to the realities about the learners in the field. The diverse learners enable them to develop empathy, consideration, love, and commitment to

their chosen profession. Learners may also teach teachers through their behavior, beliefs, stories, successes, failures, and unique experiences. These can make the teachers more inspired to touch more lives. Teaching based on different learning styles is an effective way of facilitating learning (Yin et al., 2020).

The teacher interns' narratives also reveal that they were able to harness their planning and pedagogical skills during their internship. As teachers, planning is essential to indicate that a teacher is well-prepared in his/her lesson. Also, teaching pedagogies of teacher interns were enhanced as they adjusted to their classroom practices. This means that these teacher interns were able to put to use the theories they learned throughout their years as pre-service teachers (Yin et al., 2020).

#### **Theme 4.2: Application of Teaching Techniques and Lesson Planning**

Lesson planning and teaching strategies are some of the essentials of teaching. The lesson plan serves as the blueprint for how to carry out a lesson. Meanwhile, the strategies can help them better facilitate teaching and learning. These are some of the narratives of the participants.

*"We undergo thorough demonstration using our lesson plan before letting us handle more classes." (TI9)*

*"Acquiring and exploring other areas stock knowledge, so that we are more capable and responsible in dealing with our students." (TI9)*

*"My cooperating teacher taught me how to develop different types of lesson plans." (TI7)*

*"I developed my lesson planning and pedagogical skills during my internship." (TI1)*

*"During my first week, my mentor had so many corrections with my plans. But after few weeks, the corrections became minimal. I am so happy about it." (TI2)*

As teachers undergo teaching internship, they mention how important are lesson planning and teaching techniques to effectively facilitate teaching and learning. Teachers need to follow lesson plans to effectively manage classes (Iqbal et al., 2021). This implies that it is essential to immerse prospective teachers in these two important teaching elements to effectively and efficiently manage classes. It is common for teacher interns to experience difficulties teaching the subject and preparing for the lesson due to lack of experience (John et al., 2023).

Cullen et al. (2013) as articulated in Iqbal et al. (2021) stated that having no knowledge of making lesson plans can significantly affect the quality of classroom management.

For Adams et al. (2022), distinguished teachers serve as role models, mentors, and experts in their fields. These experts must teach the teacher interns the pedagogies and the art of planning. It is not enough that teachers have the techniques and proper planning, it is also expected to them that they have content knowledge. Hence, the knowledge will serve as teacher interns' scaffold to think of better techniques and to properly design effective lesson plans.

### **Theme 5: Emphasis on Mental Health, Professionalism, and Ethics**

In order to fulfill their mandates, teachers must be in good health, both physical, mental, and emotional. They are also expected to abide by professional and personal standards to be worthy of being in the most dignified profession. Here are some of their stories.

*"My college supervisor and cooperating teachers told us to be good role models for our students, show professionalism, and apply good ethics." (TI 10)*

*"My mentor values the mental health of student teachers." (TI 33)*

*"My mentor always says, 'Don't get pressured, just be you.'" (TI 7)*

*"I was advised by my mentor to set boundaries with my treatment to my students." (T47)*

*"I am taught by my cooperating teacher to be committed to my profession and teach well because, at the end of the day, the quality of my students will reflect based on the quality of my teaching." (T13)*

Other than enhancing their content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and technological competence, teacher interns also acquired other valuable lessons from their internship journey. They Were taught by their college supervisors and mentors to be role models, relaxed, healthy, and professional when dealing with their learners. Mentor support helps teacher interns overcome the challenges they encounter (Napanoy et al., 2021). This means that these teacher interns placed in their subconscious mind that professionalism and high ethical standards are important qualities that teachers must possess to preserve the dignity of the profession. Professionalism is measured by a person's competency, experience, and efficiency (Suyatno et

al., 2023). Fuadi et al. (2023) also highlighted that professionalism is continuous growth and competence. The experience acquired by the teacher interns is an important factor in improving themselves in preparation for the world of work (Suyatno et al., 2023).

From one of the teacher interns' experiences, his/her mentor advised him/her to take care of his/her mental health. This suggests that as teachers, they must ensure that they are not only physically and mentally fit but also mentally stable to cope with the challenges of the profession for teaching is an exhaustive profession (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021; Fuadi et al., 2023). However, studies show that teachers who tend to suffer mentally are those who are teaching remotely (Kush et al., 2022). Hence, to ensure that teachers are less stressed in their jobs, they must continuously be immersed in classroom teaching.

### **Sub-theme 5.1: Real World's Challenges and Coping Strategies**

The real test of finding out whether a person learns or not is when he/she can apply all his/her learnings from a real-world setting. This was the challenge among the teacher interns. From their narratives below, they faced real-world challenges and learned to cope with those challenges. Below are some of their narrations.

*"I never imagined that I would gain so much experience during my teaching internship." (TI21)*

*"Some of the textbook knowledge I learned were put to use during my internship." (T41)*

*"The most challenging experiences during the internship program were managing classroom dynamics and addressing diverse student needs." (TI20)*

*"To cope, I prioritized open communication with my mentor, sought guidance from experienced colleagues, and continually reflected on my teaching methods." (TI 31)*

*"The most challenging experience I had during my internship program is dealing with diverse students wherein you really need to know where they came from so that you can understand them better." (TI50)*

The narratives of the teacher interns imply that apart from gaining experiences, they also learned to apply the theories that were previously taught to them. In the same breath, Suyatno et al., (2023) also found that gaining experience from the real world was meaningful for the teacher interns. From them, they cope with challenges by using their prior knowledge

from the concepts and theories they learned and from continuously seeking help from their mentors. Similarly, Al Abiky (2021) also revealed that the common challenges encountered by teacher interns reflect the realities in the world of teaching. Usually, teacher interns experience problems with their knowledge of the subject matter and pedagogical competence. One of the common problems that previously emerged from the lack of knowledge competence of the teacher interns takes its roots from the mismatch between what is taught in colleges and universities and the basic education (Al Abiky, 2021).

This further suggests that it also takes a village to prepare teachers. The higher education institutions must ensure that the pre-service teachers learn the updated and relevant principles, theories, concepts, laws, and skills that are useful that will better prepare the pre-service teachers. Meanwhile, the cooperating schools must ensure that the teacher mentors are committed and patient in dealing with the teacher interns to encourage them to pursue their career and to better train them to survive to the so many sided tasks that teachers have to fulfill. With the support from the cooperating teacher, teacher interns can overcome the difficulties they encounter (Napanoy et al., 2021).

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that teacher interns' acquired first-hand experiences from their teaching internship journey can have a significant impact on their future performance and retention in the teaching profession. Their learned pedagogical, technological, and content knowledge throughout the program strengthened their capabilities to survive the challenges that the teaching profession has to offer. Their experiences enable them to explore the realities in the field thereby learning to adjust and adapt to the current educational trends. Moreover, teacher interns better appreciate the skills they learned in facilitating learner-centered teaching, technology use, continuous improvement, and professionalism. These elements would serve as the bedrock for them to meet the demand of the profession they chose to be immersed in.

It is hereby recommended that in order to provide a better responsive teaching internship program, higher education institutions must forge early partnerships with laboratory schools and other partner basic education institutions in immersing beginning teachers in the field. Early mentorship can easily expose beginning teachers to the field. Moreover, focusing on pedagogical, technological,

and content knowledge across all courses to be taken by beginning teachers can better prepare them. Finally, the higher institutions of learning offering education programs can extend the teaching internship period to ensure that the future teachers are well-equipped with enough field experiences for them to thrive in the challenging field of the teaching profession.

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