The lived experience of teaching interns during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic wreaked havoc on the educational landscape. As part of a state university's learning continuity plan, a flexible delivery system was implemented. This descriptive phenomenological study aims to investigate, through unstructured online interviews, the online teaching experience of ten (10) interns. Rigor was established following Lincoln and Guba's (1985) Trustworthiness Framework. Using Colaizzi's (1979) thematic analysis, emergent themes were identified. The interns revealed their reached and unmet expectations, as well as the challenges in delivering their lessons and managing their classes. Nevertheless, they acknowledged the presence of a solid support system. They maintained a strong cognitive-social-teaching presence. They also displayed a growth mindset, resilience, integrity, and persistence in overcoming the challenges. Despite the difficulties they faced, they experienced successes and had realizations during their online teaching internship. Moving forward, the teaching interns made some useful suggestions for improving the teaching internship program's policies and practices.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, phenomenology, Philippines, teaching interns, teaching internship

Introduction

The competency of its graduates reflects the quality of the Teacher Education Institutions, which may be reached through excellent theory and practice training. The Teacher Education Program consists of professional education courses and a teaching internship. Professional education courses, according to Othman & Md Salleh (2016), are claimed to help teaching interns perform better throughout their internship. The final part of the Teacher Education Program is the teaching internship. It is critical because it ensures that future teachers are adequately prepared. Teaching internship developed interns' personal and professional competencies for them to become effective teachers in the field (Quinco-Cadosales,2018).

Thus, a productive and meaningful internship experience is very important for every teaching intern.

Goh and Wong (2015) asserted that there is a widening gap between what teaching interns bring to their training with what they must be prepared for. This gap had become more evident at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The teaching interns are confronted with new techniques of teaching as a result of the substantial changes in learning delivery modes. As per the memorandum of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), flexible learning has to be implemented. Flexible learning is a pedagogical strategy that allows for time, location, and audience flexibility, including, but not limited to, the use of technology (CHED, 2020). With this memorandum from CHED, the higher institutions in the country, including the Integrated Laboratory School of a state university, have implemented the innovative learning modalities. This can be daunting to the teaching interns as their teacher training in the Professional Education subjects was for a face-to-face learning modality.

Teaching is a dynamic and complex profession. This reality will be revealed to the interns as they embark on their practicum or teaching internship. With the myriad of challenging tasks which the teaching interns face, at the forefront of these is the challenge of effectively delivering the lesson online. This would require technological skills and resiliency to adapt to the new normal. Furthermore, the interns' capacity to meet crises and explore opportunities during crises is also being tested. Initial discussions by the mentor-researchers with the teaching interns revealed the following experiences: new learning on the use of technology, developed sense of responsibility and time management, challenges in the virtual delivery of the lesson, challenges with internet connectivity. This phenomenon prompted the researchers to conduct a descriptive phenomenological study of interns teaching in a flexible learning modality. Although there are many studies on teaching internships, there are few studies on teaching internships during the pandemic. Understanding the experiences of these teaching interns will provide insight on a more holistic approach in mentoring practices in the new normal. This will provide an opportunity to assess the Teacher Education curriculum whether the socio-emotional competencies of the future teachers are also developed. In addition, the participants will have a better understanding of their experience of teaching online as they do a reflective narration of their experience. As every Teacher Education Institution wants all of its graduates to be highly employable and competent professionals, it is deemed that the result of this study will help improve mentoring practices to ensure that the teaching interns are prepared to teach in the new normal.

Objective of the study

This study aimed to describe the lived experience of teaching interns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Research Question: How is it like to be a teaching intern in the new normal?

Methodology

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic that hits the world, there is a sudden change in the educational landscape. For instance, the usual face-to-face teaching internship is now done virtually. Teaching internship mentors shifted to virtual coaching and mentoring. Since the start of online classes, teaching interns gave feedback on their experiences with flexible teaching (e.i. synchronous and asynchronous classes). This phenomenon is the focus of the study.

Phenomenology is a philosophy and a research method that aims to investigate and explain people's daily lives. This study used the qualitative method to describe the lived

experience of the teaching interns who are purely teaching virtually in the new normal. This study used a qualitative Husserlian descriptive phenomenological technique as well as Colaizzi's (1979) seven processes of data processing. Descriptive phenomenology is concerned with "revealing the essence or essential structure of any phenomenon under investigation – that is, those features that make it what it is, rather than something else" Morrow, Rodriguez and King, 2015). It concentrated on the descriptions provided by the participants in order to extract the essence of their lived experience.

Purposive sampling was used to identify at least ten (10) research participants, who were chosen based on their online teaching experience during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Integrated Laboratory School. Other teaching interns are excluded from the study as the number of research participants were determined by data saturation. Intensive data collection was done by one-on-one interview utilizing the open-ended interview guide. Interviews were conducted in an unstructured manner to allow for a natural flow of discourse between the researcher and the participants. The recorded individual unstructured interview was done using Google Meet or Zoom platform. The average duration of the interview was 30 to 45 minutes. Written consent was sought prior to the conduct of the study. The platform and time of the interview was mutually agreed by the researcher and the participant. The proceedings of the interview were immediately transcribed and coded.

The interview transcripts were reviewed and re-read to get a basic feel of the content, following Colaizzi's (1979) procedures in thematic analysis. Significant statements about the phenomenon under investigation have been extracted. The significant statements were used to generate meanings. Going back and forth to the data, similar formulated meanings were collapsed together to form the initial themes which described the central themes of the lived experience of the teaching interns. The findings are organized into themes to analyze the significance of the participants' lived experience. Finally, the research participants were asked to validate the findings by comparing the researcher's descriptive results to their own experiences.

The researcher used the Trustworthiness Framework of Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Nassaji, 2020) to establish rigor in the study, which includes the following elements: credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability. The researchers established credibility by presenting an accurate picture of the phenomenon under investigation. Also, a member check and analysis of past study findings were conducted. To address the dependability issue, the researchers provided sufficient information thereby enabling a future researcher to repeat the work. Transferability was established by detailed description of the context in which the research was performed and how this shaped the findings. To establish confirmability, the researcher employed audit trail strategies, showed how they made their findings through detailed descriptions, and the use of quotes (Stenfors, Kajamaa, & Bennett, 2020)

Ethical consideration

A review by the Research Ethics Committee (REC) was done. Once the REC clearance was secured, the researchers sought the consent of the supervisor of the Integrated Laboratory School to conduct the study. The teaching interns were contacted through their teaching internship mentors. Then, the consent forms were distributed to the teaching interns. Participants who accepted to take part in the study were asked to sign a consent form. Then, the researchers arranged the interview date, time, and sent the Google Meet or Zoom link to the teaching intern. During the interview, the participants were told that they could stop should they decide to discontinue the interview and if needed they will be referred to the college guidance counselor. Any data obtained from the study were treated with utmost

confidentiality. Real names of the teaching interns were not revealed in any part in the analysis of the data. The participants were given provisions for snacks and communication allowance for their participation in the study.

Results and discussion

When the COVID 19 pandemic first broke out, social distance became critical for public safety and health. Most educational institutions were caught off guard by the abrupt move from face-to-face teaching/learning to blended learning or online classes. This included the Teacher Education institutions. The teaching interns are thrust into this challenging situation. The teaching internship is the culmination of a teaching interns' education. Many parts of teaching internship have changed as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and students had to adjust to a new method of learning and teaching. Interaction with students and virtual education were anticipated by the teaching interns. They developed innovative techniques to engage in classes and hold conversations in a virtual environment as a result of the pandemic (Stidham, Nettleton, & Riegle, 2021). In this study, the teaching interns narrated their experience. The succeeding themes were derived from their narratives.

Setting expectations

Practical field experience is one of the most significant components of pre-service teacher education programs (Greve et al., 2020). The teaching internship is the practical field experience and the culmination of the academic path of teaching interns on their way to become full-fledged teachers. The real teaching involvement of the teaching interns, under the supervision of the mentor, is the actual application of the ideas gained over their first seven semesters in college. As a result, the teaching interns had a lot of expectations about what would happen throughout their internship. A teaching intern stated that she expected to undertake classroom routines such as decorating the classroom, creating instructional materials, preparing learning activities, dealing with students, and establishing classroom rules during her internship (P1). Another teaching intern (P2) was taken aback by the online instruction rather than the traditional face-to-face instruction. Student teachers were also well prepared in terms of their knowledge and basic skills necessary for the role of teacher trainee in their teaching practice, according to Othman et al. (2019); and hopefully when they are posted to school as qualified teachers.

According to Cadosales et al. (2021), the efficiency and efficacy of various teaching internship techniques for teaching interns in different nations resulted in a potentially effective teaching internship program. While student teaching internships provide a strong basis for new teachers to be effective and confident as they begin their professions, the length of training and internship has a significant impact on new teacher success. Teaching interns can benefit from the teaching internship program, which offers students with practical experience, as Anar et al. (2017) pointed out. It allows them to get a sense of what it might be like to teach. They get competence in preparation, real teaching, and measuring student learning throughout this period. It provides students with several opportunities to improve their skills and apply what they've learnt in class.

Facing roadblocks

Disruptions, out-of-field teaching, insufficient resources such as finances and devices to be used in online teaching, unmet expectations, and dangers to well-being such as being emotionally overwhelmed were all mentioned by the teaching interns as hurdles they

encountered throughout their internship. Teaching interns face challenges, such as the fact that living near a highway is inconvenient for online teaching due to the noise (P10) and staying in the house of a relative to avail of an internet connection (P5). On the other hand, a teaching intern also mentioned that teaching online disturbed her board mates or neighbors due to the noise (P3). Most of the teaching interns are specializing in Special Education. The majority of them are teaching in regular classes because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The out-of-field teaching is a challenge since they have the difficulty to design learning activities (P1), the lack of technological skills, and teaching strategies suited for the regular students (P2). The teaching interns were concerned about the availability of a gadget and intermittent internet connection (P1, P5, P9) and financial support (P4, P7). Furthermore, there were teaching interns who were concerned about the borrowed or lagging laptop used in classes (P9, P5). Since moving to the city, a teaching intern (P1) stated that she has not followed the right diet and has gotten less sleep. Another teaching intern (P3) echoed this sentiment, stating that her lack of sleep had a negative impact on her health. Similarly, another teaching intern experienced lack of composure, excessive sobbing, and skipping meals (P4). Teaching interns also reported emotional stress, such as being overwhelmed by stress and pressure (P1), as well as being nervous, disheartened, and adjusting to the routines associated with their internship (P4). Indeed, the COVID-19-induced economic and health-related impacts differ systematically by socioeconomic characteristics, according to Aucejo et al. (2020), and are crucial mediators in explaining the pandemic's substantial and varied consequences. Furthermore, Baticulon et al. (2021) discovered in their research that medical students in the Philippines faced a number of interrelated problems as they tried to transition to online learning. The most common concerns were difficulty shifting learning methods, having to fulfill duties at home, and inadequate communication between educators and learners. As a result, steps to address these concerns throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond should be put in place by designing student-centered interventions. Similarly, teachers' problems, according to Capacio et al. (2021), include rolling blackouts, inadequate internet access, computer technology operations, imposition of classroom management, lack of preparation, and adjusting to a new personal work schedule.

Receiving support

Teachers interviewed by Samoei (2020) attributed their first-year success to collaborative efforts with colleagues, mentor teacher assistance, student-teacher relationships, and time management. Similarly, the support system provided to the teaching interns propelled them to perform their roles and responsibilities to be successful in teaching internship. The teaching interns revealed that they received support from their families (P1, P3, P4, P9, P10); mentors (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P10); parents of students (P1, P10), friends (P2, P8); co-teaching interns (P2, P5, P6); and laboratory school (P2).

Teaching interns stated that their families supported them by providing not only financial assistance (P1, P2, P4, P10), but also words of encouragement, inspiration, and regular reminders to eat and rest properly (P1), as well as advice on how to deal with the pressures of teaching. The teaching interns also stated that their mentors motivated them on how to adjust to the new normal mode of teaching delivery (P1, P3); how to be more creative (P4) in lesson design (P5); how to use G-slides and videos (P9); and, most importantly, how to overcome self-doubts (P10). The mentors'' direction and supervision are key components of internship, according to Calamlam and Mokshein (2019), and they are characterized according to the conduct they displayed when they engaged with their interns. Parents of the students showed their support by providing a monthly internet allowance (P1) and responding to reminders to keep track of their children's progress in class (P10). The lockdown during

COVID-19 pandemic caused depression but a friend offered to stay in their house (P2). Indeed, friends also provide a support system (P8). Teaching interns further revealed that they received support from their co-interns through the group chat that cheered them up (P2), doing together the pre-recorded videos (P5), and practicing together on how to manipulate the Google Classroom used during online classes (P6). Lastly, the support received from the laboratory school helped a lot in complying with the requirements in teaching internship (P2).

Academic, financial, and social concerns are all contributing to an upsurge in mental health issues among university students. One of the most well-known causes of mental disorder is social isolation. Their research looked at how various types of social support affect student happiness, and they discovered that social support from family and friends is a strong predictor of psychological quality of life. Significant people and friends' social support were found to predict quality of life (social interactions). In terms of protecting students' mental health, social assistance is a critical resource for schools (Alsubaie, 2019).

Exhibiting cognitive-social-teaching presence

Community of Inquiry Framework (Garrison et al., 2000) is an online or blended learning paradigm that reflects the learning experience because of the interaction of social, teaching, and cognitive presence. The ability of learners to generate and confirm meaning through persistent personal reflection and discussion is referred to as cognitive presence. Social presence is the degree to which participants in computer-aided communication feel effectively connected to one another. Teaching presence refers to the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes by the teacher. The teaching interns' diverse experiences with students and parents revealed the three dimensions of the Community of Inquiry (CoI).

The teaching interns have a big role in facilitating the students' ability to construct and confirm meaning in what they are learning. The teaching interns established Cognitive Presence with the students as they experienced the following during online classes: varied levels of participation of the students (P9); distractions during online classes(P6); complaints on the given tasks(P4); and poor quality (P7), incomplete (7), late, dishonest (P7) or unsubmitted(P7) outputs. Nevertheless, a teaching intern offered assistance to students who were having difficulty in accomplishing the tasks (P7).

Socio-emotional interaction between the students and the teachers is essential in the effective delivery of instruction. The positive social presence creates a conducive learning environment. The teaching interns had mixed emotion of anxiety (P10), happiness (P9), challenged (P9) and fulfillment (P10) while having online classes; poor interaction with the students due to connectivity issues (P4, P6); felt the respect and appreciation of the kids (P10); and empathized with students' own struggles with online classes (P7). The teaching interns' and the students' affective connection exhibited the Social Presence in the classroom.

The teaching interns exhibited Teaching Presence as they planned, facilitated and set the direction of the cognitive processes of the students. The teaching interns revealed that online classes are still effective but not as much as the face-to-face teaching modality. The interns had a fulfilling yet challenging experience. The teaching interns had constant communication with the parents regarding the given tasks and connection issues (P4), difficulty in managing the class (P4) as students tend to talk at the same time (P10) and do not open their video (P4,P7), difficulty in facilitating the class (P4) due to unstable connection(P4), difficulty in communicating as some parents and students do not reply to messages (P5), inability of some students to attend classes due to connection problems and other reasons, difficulty in monitoring and doing follow-ups of the tasks of the students(P10),limitations in the teaching strategies that can be used (P10), and limitations in instructional materials (IMs) used as power point or Google slide are usually the IMs being

used(P10). Despite these limitations and challenges, the teaching interns tried to give their best in trying to call or involve as many students possible in the discussion (P7); they are still able to communicate with the parents of the children (P6); and that the teaching interns believed that there is still learning (P10), online teaching is still effective (P9), and that the strategies used are still able to develop the knowledge and skills of the students (P10).

Developing growth mindset, resilience, integrity and tenacity

OECD (Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development) and UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) policy statements have emphasized the importance of preparing students for a VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous) environment (Hadar, et al, 2020). They emphasize the need for social-emotional skills in dealing with such situations. The abrupt transition from face-to-face to online education put the teaching interns in a VUCA situation. Thus, the socio-emotional competence of the teaching interns were tested in these situations. The teaching interns demonstrated socio-emotional competence in coping with the VUCA situation. The teaching interns revealed surprise(P9) and shock (P8). They did not expect to have online classes (P8) for their internship since their training prior to internship is for face-to-face classes (P1). According to one intern, the study group preparation was not enough (P1). The teaching strategies and classroom management they learned was for face -to-face (P1). Adjusting to the new platform of teaching is challenging and difficult (P1). The challenges were the lack of technological skills, internet connection and internet load (P10) One participant believed she would be more confident if she can see what the students are doing and she can see their reactions (P9). The same participant opined that she could have learned more as an intern if she was able to handle face-to-face classes. The teaching interns believed that the internship training is incomplete and that the classroom management training is different (P9, P10). Because of this, a teaching intern is not ready to handle face-to-face classes in the future (P9). For one participant, during the internship, she was not able to explore other instructional materials since she just had to rely on the PowerPoint. For her she lacks internship training on making instructional materials (P8). However, the teaching interns learned to accept the situation (P8) and adjust even those who are not technologically adept (P10).

Despite the initial surprise, disappointments and challenges, the teaching interns developed GRIT as they handled the online classes. GRIT (growth mindset, resilience, integrity, and tenacity) is defined by Duckworth (cited in Keesey, 2018) as a combination of passion and perseverance. GRIT can be developed through (a) cultivating an "attitude of gratitude," (b) keeping the end in mind, (c) adopting a growth mentality, (d) identifying individuals who share these traits, and (e) fostering a GRIT culture within your circle of influence. Students who develop GRIT are able to endure in the face of hardship and achieve their objectives (Keesey et al., 2018).

The teaching interns developed GRIT by keeping the end in mind and having a growth mindset. The research participants focused on goals and motivations to face the challenges in online teaching (P3). Setting priorities (P1) , keeping a schedule (P5) and to-do list (P1,2) helped the teaching interns focus on set goals. A growth mentality encourages an optimistic attitude and desire to attempt new things because anything is achievable with hard work. Growth mindset (Dweck as cited in Keesey et al., 2018) views learning as a continuous process in which intelligence and skills may be developed via effort and adequate training. The teaching interns demonstrated a growth mindset as they exhibited a positive attitude (P8), tried to learn as much as they can about online teaching (P4), and learned to be flexible to address the varied needs of the learners (P9). They listened to the tips given by the mentor (P4) and strategized (P1) to have creative delivery of the lesson (P1,7) through interactive

online class (P2, P3, P5), effective classroom management (P1, P8), reward system and games (P3), authentic assessments (P2), and creative instructional materials (P4). They also explored the internet for creative videos, PowerPoint (P6) and other applications for online teaching (P5, P9). They also did pre- recording of their teaching demonstration (P5). Furthermore, the teaching interns developed GRIT by exhibiting passion for teaching. The teaching interns worked hard for the students (P1, P5,P8), just did what needs to be done (P2), extended effort to help a child (P8), tried to know the students (P1,P4), communicated to the students (P8,P4),were being patient with the students (P2, P6), showed commitment (P8), mastered the lesson (P1), used creative strategies (P9,P1)), and used classroom management strategies(9).

The teaching interns developed GRIT by exhibiting perseverance or tenacity. The struggles tested the perseverance of the teaching interns (P3). They convinced themselves to just persevere (P1,P5, P8), hold on to the situation (P8), keep the faith (P1) and be mentally and physically fit (P1). They tried to find a way to face the challenges (P1). One intern never allowed the problems to affect their class (P4). Another pointed out the importance of being emotionally, physically and financially ready to be able to persevere (P9). Furthermore, the research participants' stories tell their resiliency. Resiliency is the bouncing back from problems, challenges and diversity (Loomis, 2019). Resilience can be built from both inherent and external variables (Ang et al., 2021). Desire to achieve and motivation were intrinsic characteristics that boosted resilience. The ambition to obtain a degree motivated a participant to confront the difficulties (P3). Friends, family, teachers, and faith have all been found to improve resilience when it comes to extrinsic circumstances. The family, according to the teaching interns, acted as incentive (P3, P5) to overcome the obstacles.

The research participants acknowledged that the university has instilled in them excellence (P1), self-confidence (P1), and strength (P1) during internship. For one participant, the objectives of the internship are still achieved ((P8) as online teaching helped build their character, values and skills (P9). Thus, the teaching interns developed GRIT by exhibiting integrity in teaching. Integrity as one of the core values that a teaching intern must possess (Erfe et al., 2020). It will guide them to continue to take the right path, that is, to maintain their drive to stay honest and accomplish tasks. It also leads them to commit themselves to the life of being a responsible, caring, just, and reflective teacher.

Experiencing triumphs

Despite the hurdles that teaching interns encountered throughout their online teaching internship, they are grateful because their experiences provided opportunities for teaching skill development, technological skill acquisition and self-improvement in general. Teaching interns were able to explore various technological resources and tools which help them acquire and enhance their technological skills (P5, P6, P7). Technological skill refers to the capacity to interact with and execute tasks utilizing computer-based technologies and other related technologies (Kolmar, 2021). Onyema et al. (2020) noted that teaching online may provide opportunities for teachers to possess adequate technological skills in order to access resources and tools like email, web browsers, Learning Management Systems, text and video chat applications, and understand their learning and teaching capabilities and limitations.

The utilization of a variety of online resources and tools for online classes stimulates and develops the teaching interns' creative thinking processes. Teaching interns worked hard to make each class interesting in order to keep their students' attention. They described how they used interactive and fun activities in their classes, as well as some incentives, to maintain their students' interest (P2, P3, P4). According to Sharoff (2019), teaching an online course in

today's student population requires a teacher's originality and innovation, as well as a strong online presence.

In addition, online teaching internship provides cost advantages. It allows the teaching interns to save time and money and allows them to focus on their own self-development. They shared that not having to commute to school helps them save on transportation costs (P4, P7). It also means saving time because they don't need to travel to-and-from school (P10). Their experiences mirror the research findings of Mukhtar et al. (2020), Fatonia et al. (2020) and Shaheen & Maryam (2020) that with online education, both students and teachers are able to save time and money by not having to commute to class. This depicts that teaching interns can allot more resources (time and money) for their lesson preparations as well as for their personal activities.

Furthermore, the teaching interns mentioned that one of their significant successes in online teaching internship is making their students learn and knowing that their effort in teaching is being appreciated by the students as well as of the parents (P1, P6). When they receive words of gratitude and support from these individuals, they are inspired to perform their best. This indicates that teaching interns carry out their responsibilities not only to complete their tasks, but also to influence the important people in their teaching internship journey. One of the most important achievements of teaching interns, according to Hou (2015), was completing their goals and ensuring that students are learning from them

Revealing realizations

Experiences, whether positive or negative, are sources of learning. Others even regard it as the best teacher. In the online teaching internship, the teaching interns acknowledged that they have various realizations as a result of the challenges and successes they encountered. Teachers who adopt reflective practice are better able to cope with the demands and problems of the teaching profession, according to the findings of Mathew et al. (2017).

Reflecting on their online teaching internship experience, teaching interns remarked that possessing self-regulation skills is vital in their internship journey. McClelland et al. (2015) defines self-regulation skills as components of emotional intelligence that relate to how well someone governs his or her thinking and conduct. Behavioral and emotional self-regulation are two types of self-regulation.

Teaching interns' behavioral self-regulation relates to how they react to online teaching internship environments and how they act in accordance with their long-term goals and core beliefs. Following rules and directives, deferring gratification, time management, goal setting and planning, perseverance on objectives and tasks, and time and material organization are all examples of behavioral self-regulation skills, according to Murray et al. (2019). Among these, the teaching interns shared their realization that in online teaching internships, time management is essential. They specified that to manage their time, they schedule their work ahead of time (P4, P9). They also make a to-do list which helps them prioritize what to do first (P1). With these, they claimed that they were able to develop their punctuality in accomplishing their tasks. Utilizing appropriate systems and organizational skills in time management can help teachers be successful while teaching online (Bolden, 2020).

Another behavioral self-regulation skill that teaching interns emphasized is their perseverance on goals and tasks. They expressed that they were able to apply and develop their perseverance in the process of online teaching internship (P1, P3, P5, P8). Despite the difficulty, they continue to put forth effort because they think there is always a way out. (P1, P5). Perseverance evolves from the experiences of teaching interns as they attempt to adjust with and adapt to the world of work of a teacher (Erfe et al., 2020). In addition, they reflected

on how their school has shaped their perseverance. They recounted how they had been given arduous tasks since their first year in college, which had prepared them to endure in the face of adversity (P8, P10). As described by Erfe et al. (2020) perseverance is the central value that helps teaching interns realize the importance of hard work, self-reliance, and resiliency. Perseverance means having the endurance to rise above the difficulties. It allows teaching interns to embrace the idea that there is always hope.

Emotional self-regulation, on the other hand, is focused with emotional control, such as proactively processing feelings and attempting to maintain a positive view in the face of adversity. Emotional self-regulation skills include awareness of emotions, acceptance of emotion, recognizing cues of distress, and self-calming strategies (Murray et al. (2019). The teaching interns reflected that they are aware of how their online teaching internship has caused them stress. However, they stayed positive and motivated to continue with the journey because they have the passion and commitment to teach (P1, P3, P8). Teachers' passion and devotion, according to Serin (2017), drive them to stay in their career despite the problems they face. These keep them from giving up and throwing their hands in the air. In addition, teaching interns showed optimism because they believe that the situation allows them to learn new things and gain more confidence (P5, P6, P9). They viewed their experience as challenging yet fulfilling (P1, P4). According to Thompson (2021), being able to relax one's thoughts and emotions when agitated or nervous is a result of mental and emotional training. Challenges are viewed as opportunities for self-regulators to learn and better their efforts in the future. Self-regulators who are always seeking out positives can enhance their own behaviors and activities while staying focused and motivated. Teaching interns with these characteristics would be better prepared for the world of work as professional teachers. Not only do topic knowledge and pedagogical abilities separate good teachers, but so does their commitment to their teaching, their students, and their learning and achievement (Tehseen & Hadi, 2015).

Moving onwards

The teaching interns' experiences have led them in providing suggestions to improve the study group preparation and the online teaching internship. First, they expressed that their three-year study group preparation was insufficient for the online teaching internship. They were only trained for face-to-face classes, and there was no preparation for online classes. (P1, P2, P3, P6). In particular, they pointed out that the teaching strategies and the classroom management strategies they learned are tailored for traditional classrooms, not for virtual classrooms (P1, P2, P3). Despite having taken an Educational Technology course in which they were taught how to create computer-based instructional materials, they believe it is inadequate to be ready for online teaching (P2, P5). Thus, they suggested that the Teacher Education curriculum should include courses on how to teach online (P9, P5). Moreover, an intern suggested that courses on emotional and psychological maturity be included in the curriculum to better prepare the students for teaching internship (P9). According to Tindowen, Bangi and Parallag (2019), Teacher Education curriculum and course syllabus should be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they match the skills relevant in the workplace. The curriculum should be designed to prepare pre-service teachers to be competent professionals in their future employment.

Teaching internship preparation occurs not only during the first three years in college, but also during the initial stage of the internship. As part of this preparation, an orientation was conducted to discuss the responsibilities in internship. The interns suggested that the orientation for the online teaching internship be improved (P1, P9). It should not only discuss the responsibilities involved in teaching internship, but also how it should be carried

out in an online platform. An intern added that they should be made familiar with the necessary online resources and tools so they can utilize them well in their classes. Webber (2021) stated that orientation should be clear and systematic so that interns can smoothly assume assigned responsibilities and work efficiently.

Because of the pandemic's sudden shift to online teaching, many teachers were simply converting what they had planned for the face-to-face class into an online format. This circumstance was completely understandable. However, just repackaging the same content and activities from the classroom for online delivery would not suffice in the long run (Todd, 2020). Teachers remained positive in pursuing the direction of digital literacy to build effective and efficient skills in remote teaching in the new normal, according to Boholano et al. (2021). This, in turn, requires education and schools to be adoptive and adaptive to the pressing, current, and rapidly changing learning styles, modalities, and teaching infrastructure. In this sense, it is the College of Teacher Education's obligation to elevate and transform teaching so that all graduates are prepared to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century. Learners need teachers who are well equipped to face the ever-changing learning environment and expectations of numerous stakeholders as our world's demands continue to grow.

Conclusion and recommendation

The stories shared by the interns presented varied perspectives on the depths of their lived experience in teaching online during the COVID-19 pandemic. The interns shared their met and unmet expectations, and the roadblocks they encountered to effectively deliver their lessons and manage their classes. However, they acknowledged the important role played by a strong support system. This enabled them to still maintain a strong cognitive-social-teaching presence. Moreover, they demonstrated a growth mindset, resilience, integrity and tenacity in facing the challenges of teaching online. Despite all the challenges they had to hurdle, they still had triumphs and realizations in their online teaching experience. Moving forward, the interns put forth some relevant suggestions to improve policies and practice in the teaching internship program and the Teacher Education Program. Thus, it is recommended that plans of action will be formulated to address the suggestions of the teaching interns.

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