



Framing teaching internship experience in the new normal through metaphorical lens

Genalyn P. Lualhati

College of Teacher Education, Batangas State University, The National Engineering University, JPLPC Malvar 4233, Philippines

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Abstract

Teaching internship plays a crucial role in providing aspiring educators with invaluable real-world classroom exposure, translating theoretical knowledge into practical teaching skills. Hence, this qualitative research study aims to explore the teaching internship experience using metaphors among thirty (30) prospective teachers in one state university in the Philippines, framed within the context of the new normal. Through careful analysis of written metaphoric expressions and accompanying explanations, seven (7) distinctive themes emerged. These themes are enhancement of knowledge and skills, transfer of learning, building effective communication skills, management of diverse learners, facilitation of learner-centered teaching, challenges of the teaching profession, and being and becoming a beginning teacher. These themes form the basis for proposing a comprehensive model to ensure positive teaching internship experience. These underscore three key components such as pedagogical skills, inclusive classroom, communication and engagement. Tailored for practice teachers in different Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs), this model aims to equip future educators with the essential preparation and training to succeed in the dynamic educational landscape, particularly in the time of the new normal.

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Introduction

Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) hold a critical role in equipping prospective teachers (PTs) with essential skills for effective primary and secondary education. The establishment of standardized objectives, components, and processes in teacher education curricula

is vital in preparing PTs to meet the evolving demands of the future workforce. This commitment to excellence is a global concern, emphasizing the link between teaching quality and student outcomes. Regulatory bodies worldwide advocate for hands-on experiential learning to enhance teaching methodologies through practical application.

E-mail address: mrslualhati@gmail.com.

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In the Philippines, TEIs are entrusted with the task of preparing skilled educators. The Commission on Higher Education (CHED) mandates the inclusion of hands-on experiential learning, exemplified by the six-unit course, descriptively known as Teaching Internship. This course offers early exposure to the actual learning environment, facilitating better preparation and appreciation for pre-service teachers. Notably, Teaching Internship serves as a bridge from theoretical understanding to practical classroom application. Anderson and Stillman (2013) mentioned that teaching internship is the critical and concluding phase that significantly contributes to the preparation of competent teachers. Further, this is a bridge from theory to practice because this provides interns the opportunity to apply the pedagogical concepts, they learned to a real classroom lesson or setting (Jinyoung, 2020).

Collaboratively, the Department of Education (DepEd), through its Basic Education Schools (BES) provides authentic learning environments for practice teaching, supporting TEIs in nurturing future teachers. PTs will observe, verify, reflect on, and practice the different components of the teaching-learning processes. Hence, the partnership of CHED and DepEd, through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA), ensures that the PTs get maximum benefits from their experiential learning courses.

However, according to Goh and Wong (2015), there is a widening struggle of integrating and applying knowledge learnt in actual classroom setting; hence, it is significant to predict practice teachers' success in internship program (Marasigan, 2018). In fact, the internship or teacher education preparation has been struggling to keep pace with societal and technological changes; to add, the accompanying challenges brought by COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic drastically changed the educational landscape, specifically, learning delivery modes, confronting PTs with new techniques of teaching. As cited by Marcum-Dietrich et al. (2020), learning became online and flexible and both in-service and pre-service teachers are adapting to the new teaching-learning delivery. Corollary to this, TEIs shifted to flexible internship program as guided by the policies and guidelines of CHED. While this change is the practical action to be taken, there are challenges met by the PTs such as insufficiency of existing technological infrastructure, learning management system (LMS), availability of learning materials (Adedoyin & Sokyan, 2020; Donitsa-Schmidt & Ramot, 2020), lack of technological skills and readiness to hold online and flexible classes (Kolmar, 2021) and internet connectivity (Goh and Wong, 2015).

With the stated challenges and given scenario faced by the prospective teachers as discussed previously, it is considered necessary to conduct research on teaching internship experience amidst the pandemic. Various researches have been conducted on teaching internship; however, few focus on the experiences of these interns during the pandemic through metaphorical images. As said by Martinez et al. (2001), metaphors serve as blueprints of thinking of an individual enabling one to think and converse about abstract and subjective experiences. This offers a novel and insightful lens that may be utilized for understanding the teaching internship experience. By encouraging participants to describe their experiences using metaphors, the researcher can delve into the abstract and subjective dimensions of teaching, gaining authentic and reliable insights that go beyond surface-level observations. This approach has the potential to capture the complexity, emotions, and cognitive structures underlying the participants' journey into the world of education.

Through this study, the researcher, a college instructor handling experiential learning courses, believes that baseline information in formulating more comprehensive mentoring approaches and practices in the new normal will be provided. Using a metaphorical lens, this paper described the teaching internship experience in the new normal of teacher education students from the College of Teacher Education, Batangas State University, The National Engineering University, Malvar, Batangas, Philippines during the Academic Year 2021–2022. Specifically, this aimed to identify the metaphors used by the respondents to describe their teaching internship experience in the new normal; categorize metaphoric illustrations based on dimensions and themes; propose a model for a positive teaching internship experience; and lastly, formulate recommendations for a more comprehensive mentoring program in the new normal.

Theoretical Perspective

Metaphors constitute fundamental cognitive mechanisms, exerting a profound influence on the analytical and strategic facets of education, particularly in how educators conceptualize pedagogy and learning processes. As cognitive blueprints, metaphors not only guide teachers in comprehending the essence of learning, but also mold the cognitive framework, attitudes, and behaviors of prospective educators.

Martinez et al. (2001) classifies metaphors into behaviorist/empiricist, cognitive, and situational or socio-historical perspectives. The behaviorist/empiricist

viewpoint metaphorically characterizes the mind as a wax tablet, inscribed with experiential imprints from the physical realm. From a cognitive stance, knowledge assumes the form of coherent schemas, dynamically shaped through the transformation of existing structures or inductive derivation from diverse experiences. The situational or socio-historical perspective posits knowledge as a shared entity within social frameworks and materialized through artifacts like books and computers. This perspective negates the notion of exclusive individual cognition, asserting that learning is a product of active engagement within a community of practitioners.

In the present educational situation marked by unprecedented disruptions and transformations, both educators and interns are likely to draw upon metaphors to navigate their experiences. In this context, the behaviorist/empiricist perspective resonates with the tangible and discernible facets of learning in the new normal, potentially portraying internships as imprints in the digital domain. The cognitive perspective, centered on schema evolution, mirrors how interns forge novel teaching strategies and adapt to virtual learning environments.

Given the collaborative and communal nature inherent to contemporary teaching and learning, especially in the era of the “new normal” characterized by the fusion of digital platforms and social interactions, the situational/socio-historical lens aligns aptly with the focus of the study. Teaching internship experiences assume the guise of shared knowledge within a community of practice, intrinsically influenced by socio-historical contexts and mediated through technological tools. This perspective encapsulates the intricate interplay of individual cognition, social dynamics, and the distinctive challenges posed by the new normal. It acknowledges the dispersed nature of knowledge and learning within this context, harmonizing seamlessly with the metaphorical lens adopted in the study.

By adopting the situational/socio-historical perspective proposed by this theory, the researcher adeptly captures the metaphorical framing of teaching internship experiences within the contours of the new normal. This analytical framework thoroughly evaluates the collaborative, communal, and technologically mediated aspects of these experiences, enriching the interpretation and understanding of metaphorical representations of teaching internships. Consequently, it provides invaluable insights into the challenges, adaptations, and transformative aspects of pedagogy within the evolving educational landscape.

Methodology

Research Design

This study utilized a qualitative research design to portray the teaching internship experience within the framework of the new normal for teacher education students through their written answers and explanations. The approach was informed by the conceptualization of metaphors as potent instruments for communicating profound insights across diverse domains, as articulated by Lakoff and Johnson (2003). By embracing a qualitative methodology, the research aimed to not only capture the essence of the experience but also to foster a creative and distinctive portrayal of the phenomenon, in alignment with the views of Carpenter (2008).

Participants

Thirty (30) secondary education students from the College of Teacher Education, Batangas State University, The National Engineering University, Malvar, Batangas, Philippines during the Academic Year 2021–2022 participated in this study. Their inputs on the teaching internship program using metaphors may be utilized for training program enhancement (Mangila, 2018). To maintain the integrity of the research, participants were chosen based on their completion of the required units of the teaching internship course. This criterion ensured that participants had undergone a comprehensive exposure to the teaching internship program, enabling them to provide meaningful metaphors and explanations. Their firsthand engagement with the program equipped them with the depth of experience necessary to contribute meaningfully to the study’s exploration of the teaching internship experience in the new normal. Moreover, this purposeful selection aimed to secure a diverse pool of perspectives, encompassing a range of experiences, viewpoints, and challenges encountered during the teaching internship journey.

Data Collection

The data collection process was carefully structured to ensure transparency, authenticity, and ethical integrity. The researcher obtained a formal consent through a formal letter, which was duly approved by concerned higher authorities. Upon approval, participants underwent an orientation session aimed at clarifying the significance of their contributions and the research objectives and

methodology. This step was crucial in building a foundation of trust and understanding between the participants and the researcher.

Subsequent to the orientation, a two-hour session was organized during which participants were given the opportunity to metaphorically express their teaching internship experiences amidst the pandemic on blank sheets of paper. The thought-provoking question, "Using a metaphor, how will you describe your teaching internship experience amidst the pandemic?" aimed to elicit creative and personal responses. Participants not only provided metaphorical descriptions but also elaborated on their chosen metaphors using the English language. This approach enabled an exploration of their thoughts and feelings. The responses and explanations, captured verbatim, were treated with utmost respect for authenticity and integrity. Data integrity was maintained by ensuring no alterations were made to the participants' original expressions, and confidentiality measures were rigorously followed. Basically, the data collection process upheld ethical standards, fostered participant engagement, and generated a rich dataset portraying genuine insights into teaching internships during the pandemic.

Data Analysis

To analyze and interpret the data, content and thematic analysis by Schreier (2012) was used by the researcher. The metaphoric images and its explanations were personally interpreted and analyzed through open coding and pattern-identification (Strauss, 1987). Similarly-interpreted images and explanations were categorized using metaphors of teaching and learning dimensions by Martinez et al. (2001) such as behaviorist, cognitivist, and situative. Furthermore, the researcher, analyzed the underlying concepts and associated meanings for each category to come up with themes (Prawat, 1999).

Results and Discussions

This part reveals the key findings obtained from the responses given by the participants with a belief that these cannot be generalized to teacher interns of other TEIs. Consequently, it is significant to explore pre-service teachers' metaphorical plotlines (Pinnegar et al., 2011) and explore other teaching internship metaphorical images to understand their experiences (Rogayan Jr. & Reusia, 2021).

Metaphorical Illustrations of Teaching Internship Experience

Using the metaphors of teaching and learning dimensions, the researcher came up with the succeeding tables. Based on the content analysis, seven (7) themes emerged from the metaphors used by the participants to describe their teaching internship experience in the new normal. The discussions of each table were done in an exploratory manner.

The participants used a food web to show that Table 1 they served as the producer of knowledge in their internship while engaging their students into a meaningful classroom experience in order to learn. Pre-service teachers play an important role in transferring learning to students (Rogayan Jr. & Reusia, 2021); if this is achieved, students can apply their knowledge and skills in different life situations. They experienced conducting lesson discussions and explaining complex topics to help students grow, develop and succeed in their classes. These were manifested by metaphors used such as plant, tree, and flower. It is worthy to note that the teaching internship experience of the participants is fulfilling since they believed that they assist their students towards the fulfillment of their dreams. The vehicle used as a metaphor signifies moving forward in life and the teacher's role is so critical for this to happen. These analyses were supported by Boyd (2019), stating that the Immersion Program of pre-service teachers is life changing and had a great impact on their lives.

Building effective communication skills is reflected in the metaphors such as cellphone, letter and notes signifying that PTs experienced communicating and building relationships with different individuals. They were trained with strategies to effectively communicate with students and parents, which constitutes the basic need for academic success. Cohort (2016) said that to motivate learners in the learning process, teachers need to adopt positive communication skills. More so, the participants learned to overcome barriers to communication. This training gives them confidence in building partnership with parents towards developing students' well-being and academic achievement. During the pandemic, strengthening communication, transparency and trust is key to combat stress and anxiety among parents, teachers and students (Parczewska, 2020).

Synthesizing these findings underscores that teaching internships within the new normal encompass a multifaceted journey characterized by knowledge enhancement, transfer, and proficient communication. These significantly contribute to existing knowledge and clearly illustrates the transformative nature of teaching internships in the new normal.

Table 1 Metaphorical illustrations of teaching internship experience from a Behaviorist dimension

Themes	Metaphoric Illustrations	Associated Meanings	Exemplar Texts
Enhancement of Knowledge and Skills	Sharpener	Training on how to deliver lessons and use technology	<i>"I was sharpened to learn everything, especially, teaching and lesson delivery with technology, despite the situation, and I am grateful to my cooperating teacher for helping me finish my 360 hours."</i>
	Book, Ballpen, Pencil	Gaining knowledge and skills in teaching	<i>"There is much information I gained. It helps me better understand the role of the teacher in the classroom most especially if there is COVID."</i> <i>"My experience leaves a mark and, in the end, I gain more pedagogical and technological knowledge and skills as a future teacher."</i>
Transfer of learning	Food Web	Discussing and explaining the lesson to help students learn and grow	<i>"Being a producer, I need to give my consumers enough knowledge, the right number of facts, an interesting and fun discussions and engaging activities to succeed in their studies."</i> <i>"I think is worth it when you see them (students) grow."</i>
	Plant, Tree, Flower	Assisting students to fulfill their dreams	<i>"My experience is rewarding because I help them to move forward in life".</i>
Building Effective Communication Skills	Cellphone	Communicating with students and parents	<i>"To be a great teacher someday means knowing how to have a dialog to varied people, like students and their parents. We have Facebook group chat to maintain communication."</i>
	Letter, Notes	Overcoming communication barriers	<i>"Maintaining open and clear communication with students, parents and cooperating teachers is important in teaching; most especially, there are barriers to learning due to flexible learning. I learned to clarify ideas before communication."</i>

The participants' metaphorical expressions provide valuable insights into their experiences while resonating with established teacher education theories. Analyses of these metaphors deepen understanding of teaching internships' role in shaping future educators. Integrating these metaphors within teaching and learning dimensions serves as a strong theoretical foundation, infusing richer meaning into each theme and highlighting the dynamic interplay between pre-service educators, pedagogical growth, and the evolving educational landscape.

Table 2 shows the metaphors that represent participants' experiences as facilitators of learning categorized as cognitivist dimension (Martinez et al. 2001; Maxwell, 2015). Two (2) themes emerged, namely, management of diverse learners and facilitation of learner-centered teaching.

The participants experienced managing and handling diverse learners in the classroom as reflected by metaphors like zoo, wildlife, crayons, sun, candle and lamp. Facilitating the learning process in diverse learners and recognizing and respecting individual differences ensure that all students can attain desired learning goals. Since schools continuously faced diversity challenges, teachers are expected to be prepared in delivering inclusive practices in a mainstream classroom. In line with this, Dapudong (2014) mentioned that educators must be well-prepared in delivering instruction that accommodates diverse learning needs. Similarly, Bilbao (2016) underscores the urgency of fostering an inclusive pedagogical approach. Further, Lualhati (2002) reiterates that TEIs play an important role in training pre-service teachers with the necessary competencies to effectively manage the complexities of diverse classrooms.

Table 2 Metaphorical illustrations of teaching internship experience from a cognitivist dimension

Themes	Metaphoric Illustrations	Associated Meanings	Exemplar Texts
Management of Diverse Learners	Zoo, wildlife	Differentiates instruction to cater individual differences and holistic development	<i>"I met different kinds of students; because of them my internship experience is wonderful."</i>
	Crayons (2)	Students with different backgrounds	<i>"I fully understand different colors of students." "I recognize multi-cultural background."</i>
	Sun, Candle, Lamp	Different learning styles/multiple intelligences	<i>"I have 35 active and dynamic students; they bring light to my day because they show different skills and capabilities."</i>
	Mall, Ocean	Different expectations for all learners	<i>"Recognizing that students' ideas and knowledge are varied and huge. It is so broad that I am challenge how to discuss lessons, but I need to accommodate and love them all."</i>
Facilitation of Learner-centered Teaching	Captain of a Ship	Support learners	<i>"I assist my students as they sail every day to learn. I just provide guidance to them. I give them time to discover things on their own."</i>
	Basketball Coach	Realize students' talents and acquired learning	<i>"I got to meet motivated students who take control of their learning process, making my task easy. I want to push them every day to realize their potentials."</i>

Worth mentioning is the participants' recognition on the importance of accommodating diverse learners in their classroom. This could be a good indicator of remarkable teaching internship experience as demonstrated by the given metaphors, namely, mall and ocean. This signifies that the next pool of teachers has positive attitude towards diversity and are ready to support learners with variety of backgrounds and culture despite the challenges it may bring in lesson and materials preparation. Loreman et al. (2013) revealed that 21st century educators must have strong desire and commitment to teach inclusive classes.

Their teaching internship experience was also described as an opportunity to facilitate learner-centered teaching. The PTs responded that they learned to provide their students with opportunities, resources and guidance to make their own learning. The use of captain of the ship and basketball coach would show they function as a learner-centered practice teacher. Teaching students how to study and learn on their own is important because they are empowered to take ownership of what they should learn. Steckol (2007) said that students must be trained to master their own learning skills and strategies.

In general, the metaphorical representations in the table shows the complex nature of participants' teaching internship experiences within the cognitivist dimension. The synthesis underscores their two-fold commitment, namely, their devotion to inclusive teaching methodologies and their dedication to learner-centered pedagogical approaches. This contribution holds considerable value within the field of teaching internships, as it successfully establishes a connection between personal experiences and well-established theoretical frameworks. This strengthens discussions surrounding proficient and effective teaching methodologies, particularly in the ever-changing environment of diverse classroom contexts.

Metaphoric illustrations symbolizing participants' exposure to authentic and challenging situations resulted in knowledge and skills acquisition (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Martinez, 2001) and were categorized as a situative dimension as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Metaphorical Illustrations of Teaching Internship Experience from a Situative Dimension

Themes	Metaphoric Illustrations	Associated Meanings	Exemplar Texts
Challenges of the Teaching Profession	Roller Coaster (2)	The profession has its ups and downs; scary yet exciting	<i>"You'll feel the excitement, but as you ride, you'll get frightened, particularly if there is a virus. Regardless of how exhausted and terrified you are, you will always look at the rush and satisfaction you experienced during the ride."</i>
	Rocky road (2)	Difficulties to deal with	<i>"I've experienced too many struggles because of the transition from traditional set up to flexible class. I've also experienced having flat tires because of the anxiety given by the pandemic. It might be a long run, but I know this will soon be worth it."</i>
Being and Becoming a Beginning Teacher	Diamond	Molding process to achieve competence	<i>"I felt pressured but because of that I had a beautiful experience. There is no diamond, if there is no pressure. I experienced the beauty and burden of being a teacher. You will see the beauty of it through hard work and perseverance."</i>
	Stair, Ladder	Overcoming challenges	<i>"I need to step by step learn to achieve my dream. Every day I faced challenges; it is hard. But my cooperating teacher supported me to become the best teacher and believe in myself"</i>

As reflected in the table, the researcher used two (2) themes such as challenges of the teaching profession and being and becoming a beginning teacher. The participants stated that they experienced challenges in their teaching internship during the pandemic as reflected by the roller coaster and rocky road. Garderen and Leeuwen (2021) reported effects of the impact of the pandemic on interns' functioning. Since this is a new experience, PTs may have experienced conflict between idealistic expectations and realities of the classroom life.

The use of diamond connotes that they see their teaching internship experience as a learning and practical opportunity to develop genuine understanding of the profession. Preparatory program is a nurturing process since it molds students into competent professionals (Bukaliya, 2012). Moreover, they used stair and ladder as a representation of how the practicum has served as stepping stone towards the teaching profession as a beginning teacher. Notably, despite describing internship as challenging, PTs realized that this classroom exposure and experience made them possess the complex set of behaviors, attitudes and skills in order to carry out satisfactory performance of their roles and responsibilities. Anjum (2020) internship programs are beneficial for the undergraduate students

for their future career development, professional and personal growth.

In summary, these metaphoric illustrations offer profound insights into the teaching internship experience from a situative dimension. The challenges of the teaching profession are captured, signifying the combination of excitement and difficulties faced by interns. Despite the trials encountered, the participants recognize that the internship experience equips them with the complex skills and attitudes needed to excel in their roles as educators. These metaphors appropriately summarize the challenging yet rewarding nature of the teaching profession and its transformative impact on aspiring teachers.

Proposed Model for Positive Teaching Internship Experience

This qualitative study describes the teaching internship experience in the new normal of teacher education students using metaphors. After careful content and theme analyses, the participants revealed that their teaching internship experience is an enhancement of knowledge and skills, opportunity to transfer learning, building effective communication skills, management of diverse learners, facilitation of learner-centered teaching,

overcoming the challenges of the teaching profession, and being and becoming a beginning teacher. These interpretations served as basis in proposing a model for a positive teaching internship experience. Lualhati's model for a positive teaching internship experience is reflected in **Figure 1**.

This framework is designed for practice teachers of the Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs). The three components such as pedagogical skills, inclusive classroom, communication and engagement are based on the actual experiences of the participants of this study framed using metaphors. The practical learning activities are vital for the practice teachers to be equipped with needed competencies and be ready in the real world of work.

The first component is the Pedagogical Skills. The prospective teachers must be equipped to select teaching methods and strategies, learning activities and instructional materials or resources appropriate to learners and aligned to the objectives of the lesson. Based from the analyses done, the prospective teachers must be exposed to practicum exercises relevant to giving instruction to students, designing and learning plans and activities, and managing class with minimum supervision from Cooperating Teachers.

Differentiating instruction to accommodate individual differences and facilitating learner-centered teaching are the practical learning activities under Inclusive Classroom component. This part will require the cooperating teachers to make the prospective teachers aware and familiar with the learners' background and experiences. Also, to demonstrate concern for holistic development of learners.

The last component is communication and engagement, which is important in establishing community linkages. Prospective teachers need to assist cooperating teachers in parent meetings, orientations, and conferences. Since basic education schools follow flexible learning modes, participating in group chats and social media pages for academic purposes has become another practicum task for practice teachers. Hence, exposure to these practical learning activities will result in a positive teaching experience and enhance their capabilities and virtues to become globally competitive beginning teachers.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This qualitative inquiry described the teaching internship experience in the new normal using metaphors. Seven (7) themes emerged from the metaphors used by the participants to describe their teaching internship experience such as enhancement of knowledge and skills, transfer of learning, building effective communication skills, management of diverse learners, facilitation of learner-centered teaching, challenges of the teaching profession, and being and becoming a beginning teacher. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations in this research. The study focused exclusively on a single state university's teaching internship program, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the qualitative nature of the study may restrict the scope of quantitative insights that could have been gained from a mixed-methods approach.

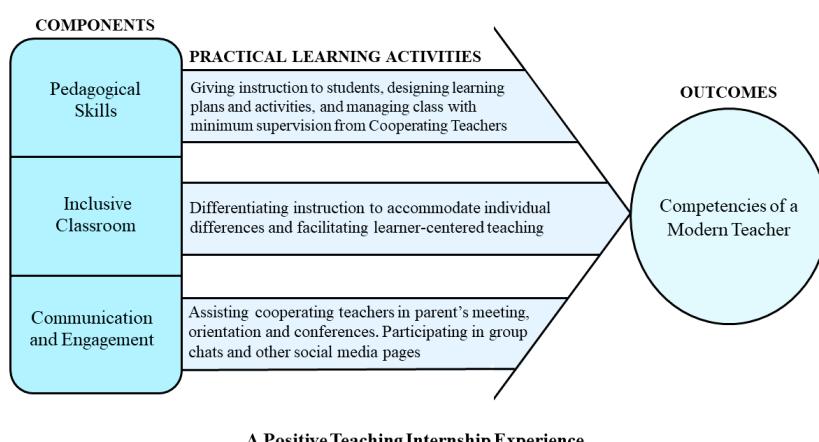


Figure 1 Lualhati's proposed model for a positive teaching internship experience

In light of the transformative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on pedagogy, Teacher Education Institutions (TEIs) are encouraged to review and revise their curricula. The integration of courses relevant to flexible learning modes can prepare and train pre-service teachers with the essential knowledge and skills to thrive in the new educational landscape.

The proposed model stands as a valuable framework for TEIs, particularly for faculty members overseeing teaching internships. It can guide the formulation of practicum plans and journals. The metaphoric portrayals also offer a glimpse into the challenges confronted by prospective teachers during internships. As such, structured orientations and regular consultations with relevant faculty are pivotal to ensure the success of the teaching internship experience.

For future endeavors, a follow-up study capturing participants' real-world experiences post-internship could offer valuable insights. Such insights might inform the development of competency enhancement programs for teachers, further advancing the pedagogical landscape.

Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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