Research Article

A Phenomenological Inquiry into Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) Graduates' Strategies for Overcoming Challenges during Teaching Internships

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Article Info

Abstract

This phenomenological research investigates the lived experiences of BEED graduates during their teaching internships, focusing on the challenges they faced and the strategies they employed to overcome them. Guided by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, data were gathered through focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with BEED graduates who completed in-person internships. The results reveal challenges such as classroom management, language barriers, adjustment to teaching roles and expectations, physical and emotional strain, professional relationships and dynamics, and resource constraints. To overcome these challenges, participants employed effective time management, backup planning, leveraging support systems, maintaining professional presentation, employing strategic proactivity, and adapting teaching approaches to diverse classroom settings. The results emphasize how participants turned challenges into opportunities for growth. With these insights, it is recommended that actionable recommendations be provided to enhance internship experiences like mentorship, fostering adaptability, and integrating strategies for well-being into teacher education programs to contribute to the development of reflective practitioners who are well-prepared for the demands of the teaching profession.

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Introduction

The Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) program serves as a vital foundation for developing future educators, equipping them with the essential skills, knowledge, and professional values necessary for success in the teaching profession (Abana et al., 2021; Heretape, 2023; Santiago, 2024). Central to this program is the teaching internship, a transformative phase where students bridge theoretical understanding with practical classroom applications (Boholano et al., 2024; Liu, 2020). Recognized as a pivotal step in teacher preparation, internships provide invaluable opportunities for growth while simultaneously presenting significant challenges (Gumilet et al., 2021).

Globally, teaching internships are increasingly viewed as essential in addressing the growing demands on educators in dynamic and diverse educational systems (Ansari, 2025; Sousa et al., 2024). Programs across various countries emphasize the importance of equipping future teachers not only with content knowledge but also with the ability to navigate classroom complexities and diverse learner needs effectively (Auni et al., 2022; Estes, 2017; Murtiningsih et al., 2024). However, challenges such as classroom management, socio-cultural adaptation, and balancing professional responsibilities persist as common obstacles in teaching internships, underlining the need for effective strategies and institutional support (Boholano et al., 2024; Hora et al., 2019; Kaur, 2024; Pattung & Caban, 2023; Salviana et al., 2018; Tahir et al., 2018).

The dual nature of teaching internships—as both an opportunity and a challenge—has been widely acknowledged. Scholars such as Hora et al. (2020) and Maharani (2018) note that these internships often test interns' abilities to manage classrooms, adapt to diverse learner needs, and navigate the complexities of school environments. These experiences, while demanding, also enable students to develop resilience, problem-solving skills, and professional competence (Hackey, 2023; Iradel et al., 2021; Sin, 2022). The strategies employed by interns to address these challenges are critical to their growth and success.

While existing literature has documented the various challenges that teaching interns face, there is a noticeable gap in understanding how they actively respond to and navigate these difficulties. Most studies focus on describing the obstacles rather than examining the concrete coping strategies employed by interns—particularly from the perspective of their lived experiences. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring both the nature of the challenges and the specific strategies BEED graduates used to overcome them—an area that remains underexplored in teacher education research.

This research investigates the lived experiences of BEED graduates during their teaching internships, with a focus on the challenges they encountered and the strategies they employed. Guided by a phenomenological approach, the study addressed the following research questions: (1) What challenges did BEED graduates face during their teaching internships? and (2) What strategies did BEED graduates employ to overcome these challenges? By answering these questions, the study aims to illuminate how interns transform difficult experiences into meaningful opportunities for growth.

This inquiry contributes to the broader discourse on teacher preparation by examining the adaptive strategies used by BEED graduates. The findings offer insights for strengthening mentorship practices, designing responsive institutional support systems, and enhancing the relevance of teacher education curricula. These insights underscore the importance of creating environments that empower teaching interns to succeed and respond effectively to the evolving

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needs of today's classrooms (Flores, 2020; Hollins & Warner, 2021).

Ultimately, this study affirms the critical role of teaching internships in cultivating confident, competent, and adaptable educators. By documenting how BEED graduates manage and overcome the challenges they face, the study contributes to the development of

evidence-based practices that enhance the quality of teacher training programs. It also highlights the ongoing need for innovation in teacher education to ensure that graduates are fully equipped to address the complexities of diverse and ever-changing teaching environments.

Theoretical Lens

This study is grounded in David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which presents learning as a cyclical process in which experience plays a central role. According to Kolb (1984), the learning cycle consists of four interrelated stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. For learning to be effective, individuals must continuously move through these stages in a dynamic, cyclical manner grounded in practice.

The cycle begins with Concrete Experience, wherein learners engage directly in new situations or revisit prior experiences (Bartle, 2015; Kolb, 1984). In the context of the BEED program, this phase occurs when student-teachers participate in classroom-based teaching internships (Nghia & Tai, 2017), exposing them to the realities and challenges of the teaching profession.

Learners then enter the stage of Reflective Observation, in which they analyze their experiences critically (Bassot, 2015; Kolb, 1984). This reflection involves examining actions, reactions, and emotions (Bardach et al., 2022), and facilitates a deeper understanding of classroom dynamics and professional responsibilities. Through this process, interns begin to identify what was effective, what was not, and why.

The third phase, Abstract Conceptualization, involves transforming reflections into theoretical

understanding (Kolb, 1984; Morris, 2020). At this stage, interns begin to synthesize their insights into broader concepts or teaching strategies. Based on these conceptualizations, they may revise their instructional approaches or develop new pedagogical frameworks (Amineh & Asl, 2015).

Finally, in Active Experimentation, learners apply their newly formed ideas in practice to test their effectiveness (Fallon, 2019; Kolb, 1984). BEED interns implement revised teaching strategies in the classroom and evaluate their impact. This phase reinforces learning through direct application and fosters adaptability and innovation in real-world contexts.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory offers a comprehensive model for understanding the development of professional competencies in teacher education. It highlights the interplay between experience, reflection, theory-building, and application—core elements in any meaningful internship experience. As such, ELT provides the analytical lens for this study, framing how BEED graduates confront and learn from the challenges of their teaching internships. The cyclical nature of ELT aligns with the continuous development of teaching effectiveness and underscores the value of internships in shaping reflective, adaptive, and professionally competent educators.

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Methodology

Research Design

This qualitative study employed phenomenology to examine the lived experiences of BEED graduates during their teaching internships, with particular attention to the challenges they faced and the strategies they used to overcome them. Phenomenology was well-suited to this research, as it aims to understand and describe the essence of experiences from the participants' perspectives. By prioritizing their voices, this approach enabled a deeper exploration of the personal and contextual factors that shaped their responses to adversity. As Moustakas (1994) and Greening (2019) emphasized, capturing the essence of lived experiences is central to phenomenological research.

Research Participants and Sampling Procedure

This study included ten participants. While the sample size may appear limited, Kumar et al. (2020) maintain that a sample of three to ten participants is sufficient for phenomenological inquiry, where depth of insight is prioritized over breadth (Lyons et al., 2024).

Participants were selected through purposive sampling to ensure they possessed direct, relevant experience with teaching internships. In line with Patton's (2014) recommendations, this method allowed for the in-depth exploration of information-rich cases. The inclusion criteria required that participants be BEED graduates who had completed an in-person teaching internship in two elementary schools in Cateel, Davao Oriental. All had taught across multiple grade levels and maintained reflective journals, providing detailed documentation of their experiences. These criteria ensured both relevance and diversity in examining the challenges and strategies associated with the internship process.

To ensure data saturation, interviews continued until no new themes or insights emerged. After the tenth participant, responses began to reflect substantial redundancy, indicating that thematic saturation had been achieved—consistent with qualitative research standards (Guest et al., 2006; Naeem et al., 2024).

Data Sources, Collection, and Analysis

Data were gathered through focus group discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs), allowing for both collective insights and deeper individual reflection. The FGD, consisting of seven participants, was conducted in a private and comfortable setting to facilitate open dialogue and the sharing of common experiences (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The IDIs involved three participants who offered more personalized and nuanced accounts of their internship journeys (Minichiello et al., 2008). This combination provided a comprehensive understanding of the lived experiences of BEED graduates.

A semi-structured interview guide was used to explore issues related to challenges encountered and strategies employed. The guide included open-ended questions designed to elicit reflections aligned with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. This structured yet flexible approach ensured consistency while allowing participants to speak freely.

All discussions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Thematic analysis was carried out using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, development of

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themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. OpenAI (2024) tools were utilized during the coding and theme-generation phases to assist in identifying semantic patterns and relationships. However, all analytic decisions were made by the researcher, ensuring that AI functioned solely as a tool to support, not replace, human interpretation.

The researcher critically evaluated the AI-assisted outputs, cross-referenced them with the raw data, and refined emerging themes to ensure they accurately reflected participants' experiences. OpenAI (2024) also aided in organizing thematic excerpts and drafting initial descriptions, helping streamline the process without compromising the interpretive rigor required in phenomenological analysis.

This AI-supported approach contributed to a structured, efficient, and rigorous thematic analysis while maintaining the researcher's interpretive authority and preserving the authenticity of participants' narratives.

Ethical Considerations

Participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study and their rights. They were assured that participation was voluntary, their responses would be kept confidential, and they could withdraw at any point without consequence. All participants provided informed consent before participating.

Throughout the research process—from participant recruitment to data analysis—ethical standards were upheld to ensure the study was both methodologically sound and ethically responsible. This study aimed to provide meaningful insights into the challenges and coping strategies of BEED graduates within a distinct educational context.

Results and Discussion

Challenges Faced by BEED Graduates during Teaching Internships

Participants identified thirteen core ideas about the challenges encountered during their teaching internships, which were categorized into six major themes: (1) classroom management challenges, (2) language and communication barriers, (3) adjustment to teaching roles and expectations, (4) emotional and physical strain, (5) professional relationships and dynamics, and (6) resource constraints and instructional challenges (see Table 1).

Classroom Management Challenges

Classroom management emerged as a primary challenge among BEED graduates. Effective behavior management techniques were essential, particularly as interns were expected to transition between activities seamlessly while maintaining student focus (Aloka & Seyi-Oderinde, 2024; Atkins, 2018; Stevenson et al., 2020). Participants described:

> FP1: "Working with Grade 2 pupils was one of the most challenging experiences I encountered during the teaching internship... I couldn't help but raise my voice because they were not listening... My CT took notice and later told me I sounded mad."

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FP3: "Unfortunately, I was not able to carry out what was planned due to misbehaving students... I failed at classroom management that time. It did reflect on my ratings."

FP5: "One student had an outburst because he wanted the ball all to himself. My unexpected challenge was teaching a child with a disability. I had no idea how to approach him properly."

IP3: "Yes. I encountered pupils who were at each other's throats. I had to be quick on my feet and go between them."

Table 1. Major Themes and Core Ideas on Challenges Faced by BEED Graduates during Teaching Internships

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Classroom management challenges	Need for effective behavior management skills to handle disruptions and integrate new activities.
	Strategies for managing diverse student behaviors and maintaining order in the classroom.
Language and communication barriers	Importance of linguistic competence to communicate effectively in the pupils' mother tongue or preferred dialect.
	Challenges of teaching and planning lessons in an unfamiliar language.
Adjustment to teaching roles and expectations	Adaptability and flexibility are crucial in adjusting to the roles and expectations of cooperating teachers and the school culture.
	Understanding the nuances of school culture and teaching expectations.
Emotional and physical strain	Emotional resilience is essential to manage personal issues and stress.
	Physical endurance needed to cope with the demanding nature of teaching roles, including lesson planning and managing extracurricular responsibilities.
Professional relationships and dynamics	Effective navigation of professional relationships with CTs who have varying attitudes and expectations.
	Managing critical feedback and uncooperative CTs effectively.
Resource constraints and instructional challenges	Creativity and adaptability in teaching with limited resources.
	Adjusting to different classroom settings that might lack essential teaching aids.
	Innovating with available materials to enhance learning experiences.

These scenarios reflect Kolb's (1984) Concrete Experience phase, wherein interns directly engaged with disruptive classroom dynamics. This stage exposed them to real-world complexities that theoretical learning alone could not address. Through Reflective Observation, they reviewed their strategies, assessed what worked, and identified areas for improvement. Eisenman et al. (2015) and Simonsen et al. (2020) emphasize the lack of practical training in classroom management among interns, while Hirsch et al. (2021), Ispas and Ispas (2023), and Marzano and Marzano (2015) underscore the importance of evidence-based strategies for novice teachers.

Language and Communication Barriers

Another significant challenge was the language barrier, especially in early-grade instruction where the mother tongue is required. As one participant shared:

FP2: "I struggled with teaching kindergarten pupils. It was primarily due to the language barrier... It was not the conversational Dabawenyong Binisaya that I am

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familiar with, but the deep Sinugbuanong Binisaya, which I am utterly unfamiliar with."

Effective communication using the pupils' mother tongue or preferred dialect is essential for successful instruction (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017; Nishanthi, 2020). However, many interns reported a lack of linguistic competence in the assigned language, which hindered both lesson planning and classroom engagement. This scenario represents a Concrete Experience in Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, wherein interns confronted immediate, real-world obstacles that required swift adaptation. Being unable to fully understand or use the local language disrupted instructional delivery and reduced the effectiveness of classroom interactions.

As they progressed into the stage of Reflective Observation, interns began to analyze the communication barriers they faced.

This involved evaluating feedback from students and cooperating teachers and reflecting on how language limitations influenced their teaching performance. Through this process, they were able to identify areas for improvement and consider alternative strategies to address these challenges more effectively.

Among the adaptive measures explored were the use of visual aids and the integration of culturally responsive teaching practices. Caingcoy (2023), Garcia and Kleifgen (2018), and Matiso (2024) highlight the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly in linguistically diverse classrooms, as a means of bridging communication gaps and enhancing student engagement. Esperat (2024), Liyanage and Tao (2020), and Pollard and Miller (2020) similarly emphasize the need for teacher education programs to prepare interns for multilingual environments by equipping them with inclusive and adaptive instructional techniques.

These reflections contributed to interns' conceptual understanding of effective communication in multicultural classroom contexts and enabled them to begin translating insights into improved practice, thus moving forward in Kolb's experiential cycle.

Adjustment to Teaching Roles and Expectations

Adapting to teaching roles and expectations is another major theme identified in the research. Interns must show they can adjust and be flexible to work effectively with their cooperating teachers and suit the school culture (Geer, 2020). As participants shared:

> *FP1: "I found it most difficult to adapt to each of my CT's behaviors. Pupils could be a handful, but you could get them to settle down with reinforcements. Dealing with different CTs is an entirely different story. Every CT has different ways of doing things. There are adjustments as you move from one CT to another."*

> *IP2: "Creating effective lesson plans that cater to the diverse needs of students and align with educational standards was time-consuming and challenging, especially for new teaching interns like me who were still learning the ropes."*

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These experiences fall under the Concrete Experience phase of Kolb's learning cycle, as interns encountered situational differences and varying expectations in real-time classroom contexts. They were compelled to adapt quickly, often without prior preparation, highlighting the need for flexibility and responsiveness. Through Reflective Observation, interns analyzed these differences, assessing how their own assumptions and teaching styles aligned or conflicted with the practices of their CTs.

This reflection process enhanced their understanding of the school culture and expectations, and highlighted the importance of professional adaptability. As noted by Spooner-Lane (2017), role ambiguity is a common challenge for interns and requires mentoring support. Similarly, Hudson (2016) and Mara and Morar (2024) underscore that strong mentor-mentee relationships—rooted in clarity and mutual respect—are crucial for fostering professional growth.

Emotional and Physical Strain

Participants also reported emotional and physical exhaustion during their internships, especially when personal and academic pressures coincided. These dual burdens were frequently experienced as interns navigated teaching, planning, and personal concerns. As noted:

> FP7: "Everything was going so well until I received a message that my brother was hospitalized for dengue fever. I couldn't contain my emotions, so when I walked into the room, I burst into tears, even though my students could see me. It was a demanding period. It really took a toll on my mental health."

> FP6: "I had to teach during the day and then stay up late into the night to prepare lesson plans. It was physically draining."

Such moments are characteristic of Kolb's Concrete Experience, where interns are immersed in emotionally and physically challenging circumstances. These demands often exceed the preparation provided by coursework alone. As they moved into Reflective Observation, participants became aware of how stress and fatigue impacted their performance and well-being, prompting reflection on coping strategies and self-care.

Beutel et al. (2019) and Burleigh et al. (2022) affirm that interns face intense demands that test their resilience. Guider et al. (2024), Karma (2024), and Wang et al. (2024) found that teacher burnout is strongly correlated with emotional exhaustion, reinforcing the importance of emotional well-being. Carr (2013), Popescu and Mogonea (2017), and Mukhametzhanova and Yestayeva (2024) also highlight the need to integrate emotional regulation and time management into teacher education programs to better prepare pre-service teachers for the multifaceted demands of the profession.

Professional Relationships and Dynamics

Interpersonal relationships—particularly with cooperating teachers—presented another notable challenge. Interns were required to navigate a variety of mentorship styles and relational dynamics, some of which were difficult or unclear. As expressed:

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FP1: "We had preconceived ideas about different CTs… I had this one CT who was perceived as strict. That perception made me very conscious of everything I did."

FP3: "I had no idea interns were supposed to be the first to arrive and last to leave. My CT told me I could go after dismissal, so I left. The next day, I heard she had said unpleasant things about me."

FP5: "There was miscommunication with one of my CTs. She gave me a reference book that didn't match the lesson objectives. I struggled with teaching the topic and received a poor rating."

IP3: "Some CTs were more hands-on and guided us, while others were more hands-off and expected us to take the lead."

These situations again illustrate Concrete Experiences in navigating institutional and interpersonal complexity. Through Reflective Observation, interns began to evaluate their professional interactions, confront assumptions, and modify how they responded to differing expectations.

Hudson (2016) and Mara and Morar (2024) underscore the importance of clearly defined mentoring relationships, while Blendea et al. (2024), Gkonou and Mercer (2017), and Messaoudi and Sakale (2024) stress that emotional intelligence and communication skills are essential for navigating professional dynamics. For interns, developing these capacities was central to both coping with and learning from difficult interactions.

Resource Constraints and Instructional Challenges

Limited access to teaching resources and materials was a persistent challenge, particularly in underfunded schools. These constraints affected lesson quality and intern morale. Participants noted:

FP6: "Some classrooms are low on resources… I had to reuse instructional materials during classes."

IP3: "It was a constant battle between wanting to provide quality resources and feeling discouraged by my own limitations."

These conditions represent Concrete Experiences where interns confronted logistical barriers to effective teaching. Through Reflective Observation, they recognized the need for innovation and adaptability, particularly in preparing instructional materials with limited support.

Vavrus (2018) emphasizes the role of teacher creativity in resource-constrained environments. Theelen et al. (2020) also highlight that adaptability is a critical teaching competency, especially in less-than-ideal learning environments. By reflecting on these constraints, interns began to explore how to optimize the materials at their disposal, reinforcing their

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problem-solving skills and pedagogical resilience.

Taken together, the six themes reveal that the challenges faced by BEED graduates during their teaching internships were multifaceted and deeply interconnected. These included issues related to classroom management, communication barriers, emotional and physical strain, shifting professional expectations, and limited instructional resources. Although each challenge appeared distinct, they frequently overlapped in practice. For instance, resource constraints often exacerbated classroom management difficulties, while emotional strain

was intensified by unclear professional roles and expectations.

These intertwined experiences pushed interns through the early stages of Kolb's experiential learning cycle—beginning with Concrete Experience, as they engaged directly with these challenges, followed by Reflective Observation, wherein they critically examined their responses and performance. This synthesis underscores the complexity of the internship experience and highlights how challenges, when viewed through a reflective lens, function not merely as obstacles but as essential catalysts for personal and professional growth.

Strategies BEED Graduates Employed to Overcome Challenges during Teaching Internships

Participants identified several strategies they used to overcome challenges encountered during their teaching internships. These strategies were grouped into seven major themes: (1) effective time management, (2) preparation and backup

plans, (3) physical and mental well-being, (4) utilizing support systems, (5) professional presentation, (6) strategic proactivity, and (7) flexibility and adaptability. The themes are discussed below.

Effective Time Management

Effective time management is a crucial strategy for BEED graduates in overcoming the challenges of their teaching internships, and this is also highlighted in the study of Gupta (2019) and Mykhaloiko et al. (2022). By setting target

dates for their tasks and carefully calculating their daily schedules, including ensuring they get enough sleep, interns can juggle different demands. They shared,

> FP1: "I'd set target dates for how soon I should finish one task so that I could immediately start the other. Everything was calculated, even my sleeping schedule."

> FP6: "I keep track of my priorities and work from the most important to the least urgent… That way, I still have time to sleep."

> IP2: "A to-do list was very helpful… I make sure to break down difficult problems for a better diagnosis."

These practices illustrate Abstract Conceptualization, as interns developed personal strategies to organize their workload. They then implemented these through Active Experimentation, testing prioritization systems

and routines. As Chan Hilton (2017) and Zorec et al. (2021) suggest, time management fosters a healthier balance between personal and professional responsibilities, reducing stress and enhancing productivity.

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Preparation and Backup Plans

Preparing backup materials and planning for unforeseen circumstances emerged as a vital strategy among BEED interns. The creation of alternative materials for instances such as technological failures demonstrates foresight and the ability to anticipate potential disruptions—rather than simply reacting when problems arise. As one participant explained:

> FP2: *"I always make sure to have backup plans in case unforeseen circumstances occur. For example, with instructional materials, I always prepare printed resources on the side in case there's a power outage and I can't use my PPT. Having a backup plan allowed me to respond quickly and continue the lesson smoothly. It's important to plan ahead and have your backup plans ready. No matter what interruptions may arise, the discussion can continue."*

Table 2. Major Themes and Core Ideas on Strategies BEED Graduates Employed to Overcome Challenges during Teaching Internships

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Effective time management	Setting target dates for tasks
	Calculating and managing daily schedules, including sleep
Preparation and backup plans	Preparing backup materials in case of technological failures
	Planning ahead to handle unforeseen circumstances
Physical and mental well-being	Prioritizing health through diet and vitamins
	Using sleep as a means to recharge
Utilizing support systems	Leveraging support from fellow interns and educators
	Encouraging camaraderie and support among peers.
Professional presentation	Maintaining a professional appearance to boost confidence and morale
	Projecting confidence despite personal issues
Strategic proactivity	Being alert and ready to handle classroom incidents
	Employing common sense in dynamic teaching environments
Flexibility and adaptability	Adjusting teaching strategies based on student understanding and context
	Adapting lesson plans for different sections

This theme reflects Abstract Conceptualization, as interns recognized the importance of preparation in fostering confidence and adaptability. It also aligns with Active Experimentation, as they applied this insight by developing and implementing contingency plans in the classroom.

Juma (2024) and Mitchell et al. (2017) emphasize that proactive classroom management—particularly through effective lesson planning and preparation—contributes significantly to teaching effectiveness. Having backup plans in place enables educators to respond efficiently to unexpected challenges, such as technical issues or shifts in classroom dynamics, thereby maintaining instructional flow and learner engagement (Li, 2024).

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Physical and Mental Well-Being

Prioritizing physical and mental well-being was identified as essential for BEED graduates in maintaining their effectiveness as educators. Abou Assali and Al Abdouli (2024) and Hackey (2023) emphasized that by focusing on proper nutrition, taking vitamins, and ensuring adequate sleep, interns are better equipped to meet the physical and emotional demands of teaching. As one participant shared:

> FP7: *"Adequate sleep is essential for me, as I find it difficult to function effectively without sufficient rest."*

Similarly, FP2 reflected,

> *"Taking vitamins is also important. Prioritizing well-being is essential for maintaining optimal performance during this demanding period."*

Another participant, FP4, mentioned that rewarding herself with a pleasant meal helped her recharge for the upcoming week.

This theme reflects Abstract Conceptualization, as interns acknowledged that maintaining well-being is integral to sustained performance. It also illustrates Active Experimentation, as they applied self-care strategies such as establishing sleep routines, taking nutritional supplements, and engaging in restorative activities. Czerwinski et al. (2021) and Neumann and Tillott (2022) support these practices, highlighting that regular exercise, adequate rest, and mindfulness activities can significantly strengthen teacher resilience and overall well-being.

Utilizing Support Systems

Leveraging support from family members, peers, and educators emerged as a key strategy among BEED graduates for coping with internship-related challenges. Participants shared that emotional and practical support played a significant role in sustaining their motivation and well-being.

> FP1: *"I'm also grateful to my niece for helping me with lesson plans and visual aids. She's just one call away whenever I need her assistance. I also appreciate my mom for preparing my meals every day and for taking over household chores. The support we received from fellow interns was also incredibly helpful."*

> IP3: *"My parents and my girlfriend were incredibly supportive throughout my internship. They provided emotional support, encouragement, and guidance whenever I needed it. My cooperating teachers were also very understanding and offered advice and assistance when I faced challenges. Their support was instrumental in helping me overcome the difficulties of the internship."*

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This theme reflects Abstract Conceptualization, as interns recognized that strong support systems are essential to building resilience and sustaining professional growth. It also demonstrates Active Experimentation, as they actively engaged their support networks by seeking help and sharing burdens when needed. As Awang et al. (2014) note, camaraderie among peers creates a valuable platform for mutual encouragement and knowledge-sharing. Similarly, Ferguson et al. (2017) and Stephen et al. (2022) emphasize that strong support systems not only help educators manage stress but also contribute positively to their development and long-term retention in the profession.

Professional Presentation

Maintaining a professional appearance was identified as a valuable strategy for fostering self-confidence and enhancing classroom presence. Interns emphasized the importance of projecting a composed and professional image, even during periods of personal stress, as a means of reinforcing their credibility and self-assurance.

> FP5: "It's important to still take good care of how you look. A little makeup or concealer to cover dark circles helps. When you look good, you also feel good. Presenting yourself well matters, even when you're feeling stressed."

This strategy illustrates Abstract Conceptualization, as interns internalized the idea that professionalism contributes to how they are perceived by both students and colleagues. Through Active Experimentation, they implemented strategies to present themselves confidently, despite internal or external stressors. As Harbin (2018), Kalahurka and Zasymenko (2022), and Zhao et al. (2015) highlight, professional appearance not only boosts teacher morale but also reinforces authority and respect within the classroom setting.

Strategic Proactivity

Interns also adopted proactive strategies to manage dynamic classroom situations. Being alert, resourceful, and responsive enabled them to address challenges as they emerged and maintain a conducive learning environment.

> FP3: "Aside from time management, it's really important to be alert and use common sense. A lot can happen in the classroom, and we must be prepared to address them. Staying alert helps create a safe environment for students."

> IP3: "Whenever I encounter something unfamiliar, I research it and watch video tutorials to improve my understanding."

> FP2: "I adjusted my approach by translating the mother tongue into English to improve students' comprehension."

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These actions reflect Abstract Conceptualization, as interns recognized the value of being proactive in anticipating and resolving issues. They also engaged in Active Experimentation by researching, modifying their approaches, and adapting instruction in real time. Villamor and Prieto (2020) emphasize the significance of anticipatory strategies for effective teaching. Similarly, Geng et al. (2019), Ollerhead and Pennington (2024), and Zondi and Mbatha (2024) assert that adapting instruction—such as using bilingual strategies—enhances both comprehension and student engagement in linguistically diverse classrooms.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Flexibility and adaptability emerged as essential qualities for addressing the diverse needs of learners. Interns described how they adjusted their instructional strategies in response to varying classroom contexts, student abilities, and grade levels.

> FP7: "I had to adapt quickly and come up with new activities on the spot to cater to the different levels of proficiency in those classes. It was challenging, but it helped me become more flexible and creative in my teaching approach."

> FP1: "When I entered other sections, I adjusted the level of difficulty of the topic. I gave easier examples and activities."

> IP3: "I was used to teaching intermediate grades, so when I was assigned to kindergarten, I had to completely change my teaching strategies and methods to accommodate the younger age group. I had to learn how to be more patient and creative in order to effectively engage and educate the kindergarten students."

Adjusting teaching strategies based on student understanding and classroom context proved to be a critical competency for BEED graduates, as noted by Boelens et al. (2018). Adapting lesson plans to suit varying levels of proficiency demonstrated their responsiveness and instructional agility. This theme aligns with Abstract Conceptualization, as interns recognized the significance of tailoring instruction to student needs, and with Active Experimentation, where they implemented and refined context-appropriate teaching methods. As Benade (2019), Catalano et al. (2022), and Lübke et al. (2021) emphasize, instructional flexibility promotes inclusivity, engagement, and effective learning across diverse educational environments.

Taken together, the seven strategies illustrate how BEED graduates responded to the challenges of their teaching internships through thoughtful, adaptive, and contextually grounded approaches. From managing time and prioritizing well-being to leveraging support networks and modifying instructional methods, these strategies reflect not only practical problem-solving but also the development of a professional identity rooted in reflective practice. While each strategy addressed distinct challenges, they often intersected and reinforced

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one another—demonstrating that effective coping during internships involves a dynamic integration of planning, resilience, collaboration, and adaptability.

Interns consistently progressed through Kolb's experiential learning cycle, transitioning from reflective observation to abstract conceptualization and active experimentation.

This process enabled them to transform challenges into opportunities for growth. Ultimately, this synthesis underscores the value of teaching internships as immersive learning environments in which real-world pressures foster personal growth, pedagogical creativity, and a deeper understanding of the teaching profession.

Conclusion

This study illuminated the multifaceted challenges encountered by BEED graduates during their teaching internships and the strategies they employed to overcome them. Guided by Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, the findings revealed that difficulties in classroom management, language and communication barriers, resource constraints, emotional strain, and varying professional expectations significantly impacted the internship experience. Despite these challenges, participants exhibited resilience, adaptability, and creativity—qualities that are increasingly essential in today's diverse and evolving educational landscape.

To address these challenges, BEED graduates employed a range of coping strategies, including effective time management, proactive planning, self-care practices, the utilization of support systems, and flexible teaching approaches. These responses reflect the interns' movement through the stages of experiential learning, where critical reflection and experimentation transformed their experiences into meaningful opportunities for growth.

In light of these findings, several enhancements to teacher preparation programs are recommended. Institutions may strengthen existing curricula by incorporating structured resilience-building activities, time management workshops, and reflective wellness practices into foundational education courses. Pre-internship

coursework—particularly simulation-based learning—can be expanded to include more complex and authentic classroom scenarios, such as managing multilingual instruction or addressing behavioral issues in real time. These experiential elements can better equip pre-service teachers for the realities of the classroom. Additionally, brief training modules for cooperating teachers may help improve mentorship quality, ensure consistent supervisory practices, and foster more supportive learning environments. These initiatives can be seamlessly integrated into current curricular structures through collaboration among faculty members, practicum coordinators, and partner schools.

While this study offers valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged. The use of a qualitative design and a purposively selected, small sample limits the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, the study's focus on a specific geographic location—Cateel, Davao Oriental—may restrict its applicability to broader educational settings. Future research could extend this work through quantitative or mixed-methods approaches, involving larger and more diverse populations across multiple regions. Longitudinal studies may also explore how internship experiences influence the long-term development of professional identity, offering deeper insights to inform evidence-based improvements in teacher education.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

Disclosure Statement

The author discloses the use of OpenAI (2024), specifically ChatGPT-4, as a supporting tool in conducting the thematic analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework, as outlined in the Methodology section. While the AI-assisted tool facilitated the organization and identification of patterns within the data, all coding decisions, theme development, and final interpretations were critically evaluated and refined by the author to ensure alignment with the participants' lived experiences and the study's research objectives.

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