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Teaching Internship Management and Pedagogical Readiness in North Cotabato: An Empirical Inquiry Into Policy, Practice, and Stakeholder Perspectives

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Abstract. This study examined how teaching internship policies and management practices are implemented in selected teacher education institutions in North Cotabato and how these practices relate to pre-service teachers' self-reported pedagogical readiness. It addressed a gap in context-specific evidence on the combined roles of policy implementation, deployment, supervision, and mentoring, while also identifying barriers to interns' preparation. A convergent mixed methods design was used, integrating survey responses from 453 pre-service teachers, 156 cooperating teachers, and 22 practicum supervisors and mentors with interviews, focus group discussions, and document analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively and through Pearson correlation, while qualitative and documentary evidence was used to identify and contextualize recurring experiences and challenges. Participants described internship management through communication and coordination, supervision and performance monitoring, and policy implementation and intern protection. Pre-service teachers reported high readiness across pedagogical skills, confidence, and classroom preparedness, with mean scores ranging from 3.30 to 3.43. Internship practices were strongly and positively associated with pedagogical readiness ($r = .957$, $p = .001$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. However, participants identified substantial barriers: lack of confidence and classroom-management difficulties (60% each), time constraints (55.8%), and limited resources (49.4%). Qualitative findings further highlighted restricted teaching opportunities, inconsistent mentorship, gaps between coursework and classroom realities, and administrative constraints. Overall, well-coordinated policies, meaningful teaching experience, and regular, supportive supervision were associated with stronger perceived readiness, although the correlational findings do not establish causation. The results indicate that high self-reported readiness coexists with practical and institutional challenges. Clearer regional guidance, stronger coordination between teacher education institutions and partner schools, improved resource provision, mentor development, and more opportunities for supervised teaching and reflection may help make internship experiences more consistent and responsive to local conditions.

Keywords: Internship Management; Pedagogical Readiness; Pre-service Teachers; Stakeholder Collaboration; Teacher Education

Introduction

The effective management, deployment, and supervision of teaching internships are central to the pedagogical preparation of pre-service teachers (PSTs). Internships provide opportunities to connect educational theory with classroom practice and to develop teaching skills, confidence, and professional identity. Yet managing these experiences can be challenging, particularly in resource-constrained settings such as North Cotabato (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).

Education reforms emphasize structured internship programs to strengthen PSTs' competencies and confidence before they enter the profession (UNESCO, 2021). However, limited institutional capacity, coordination difficulties among stakeholders, and socioeconomic conditions can hinder the implementation of these policies (Guerrero & Cabañas, 2022). In North Cotabato, resource limitations and local sociopolitical conditions may further shape how internships are organized and experienced, underscoring the need for context-specific evidence.

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Original Article

Prior research has examined how supervision and placement relate to PSTs' pedagogical skills, critical thinking, and classroom management (Klein et al., 2021), as well as the potential consequences of inadequate supervision and poorly managed internships (Sato et al., 2019). However, the studies cited here provide limited evidence about how internship management practices operate together in North Cotabato and how stakeholders perceive their relationship with PSTs' self-reported pedagogical readiness. This local and integrative evidence gap makes it difficult for institutions to determine which management practices merit attention and how broader implementation barriers affect internship experiences.

Research Questions

Accordingly, this study examines internship management, deployment, and supervision in selected teacher education institutions in North Cotabato. It addresses three questions:

1. How are internship management practices, particularly policy implementation, deployment, and supervision, described by PSTs, cooperating teachers, and practicum supervisors?
2. How are these practices associated with PSTs' self-reported pedagogical readiness, including teaching skills and confidence?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the internship management practices and the pedagogical readiness of the preservice teachers in North Cotabato?
4. What the key challenges faced by teacher education institutions in ensuring pedagogical readiness among interns in North Cotabato?

Scope and Delimitation of the Study

This study examined the management and deployment of teaching internships and their relationship with the pedagogical readiness of pre-service teachers in selected teacher education institutions in North Cotabato during Academic Year 2025–2026. It focused on internship planning, supervision, resource allocation, coordination, and reflective practices. Data were gathered from pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers, practicum supervisors, and school heads, alongside relevant institutional documents. The study was delimited to internship programs operating in North Cotabato during the specified academic year; its findings may not represent other regions or academic periods. Because the research focused on current internship cycles, it did not assess long-term effects. Data relied partly on participants' self-reports and institutional documents, which may not fully reflect actual practices. The study examined perceived pedagogical readiness and internship management, not independently observed teaching performance or student learning outcomes.

Literature Review

Teaching internship management and policy implementation

Teaching internships are a central component of teacher preparation because they give pre-service teachers (PSTs) opportunities to apply coursework in authentic school settings. Their educational value, however, depends not only on placement but also on how placements are planned, supported, and evaluated. Research on teacher education has consequently shifted from treating field experience as a single exposure to examining the quality and coherence of the experience's PSTs receive. Zeichner (2010), for example, argues that teacher preparation should connect university-based learning with school practice rather than leave PSTs to reconcile the two independently. This perspective makes internship management—policy communication, placement decisions, coordination between institutions, and monitoring—an important condition for meaningful practice.

Policy establishes expectations for these arrangements, but formal requirements do not guarantee consistent implementation. The Global Report on Teachers emphasizes the need for stronger teacher preparation and support systems, while also highlighting the importance of context-sensitive policy implementation (UNESCO & International Task Force on Teachers for Education 2030, 2024). At the institutional level, internship policies may specify roles, duration, assessment, and supervision; in practice, these provisions can be affected by staffing, resources, school calendars, and communication between teacher education institutions and partner schools. Thus, policy and practice should be examined together: policy indicates the intended structure, while stakeholder accounts and implementation measures show how that structure operates.

This distinction is especially relevant to North Cotabato, where local institutional capacity and school conditions may shape placement and supervision. Findings from other settings can inform the study's concepts and measures, but they cannot establish how policies are enacted locally. The present inquiry therefore treats policy implementation and management practices as related but distinct dimensions, rather than assuming that the existence of a policy means it is applied uniformly.

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Original Article

Supervision and mentoring in the internship

Supervision and mentoring are related forms of support, but they are not interchangeable. Supervision commonly involves observing practice, providing feedback, and assessing progress against professional expectations. Mentoring typically includes sustained guidance, modeling, encouragement, and support for professional learning. Both may contribute to pedagogical readiness, but their effects depend on the quality, frequency, and relevance of interactions.

Research on learning to teach underscores the importance of guided participation in practice. Feiman-Nemser (2001) argues that learning to teach is a developmental process that requires systematic support, not simply time spent in a classroom. Similarly, Hobson et al. (2009), in their review of mentoring in teacher education, identify benefits such as professional learning and emotional support, while noting that mentoring quality and mentor preparation vary. These studies converge on the value of guidance but differ in emphasis: Feiman-Nemser foregrounds the design of a coherent learning-to-teach system, whereas Hobson and colleagues focus more specifically on the mentor relationship and its conditions.

Supervision research also cautions against equating observation with effective support. Feedback is most useful when it is timely, specific, connected to teaching goals, and followed by opportunities to reflect and improve. A placement with frequent observations may therefore offer less learning than one with fewer but more constructive conversations. In addition, cooperating teachers and university supervisors may hold different expectations or use different assessment criteria. When their roles are unclear or coordination is limited, PSTs may receive inconsistent guidance. These findings support examining not only whether supervision and mentoring occur, but also how stakeholders describe their consistency, coordination, and usefulness.

Pedagogical readiness as an outcome

Pedagogical readiness is multidimensional. It may include perceived ability to plan and deliver instruction, manage classrooms, assess learning, adapt teaching to learners, and respond confidently to classroom demands. These dimensions should be distinguished from demonstrated competence: self-reported readiness captures PSTs' perceptions, not necessarily their observed teaching performance. A study that measures readiness through participant reports can establish associations with internship experiences, but should avoid treating those reports as direct evidence of classroom effectiveness.

Prior work on field experience generally supports the importance of opportunities to practice, receive feedback, and reflect. However, studies differ in the internship features they examine and in how they define outcomes. Some focus on mentor support or supervision, while others emphasize the broader connection between university coursework and school practice (Zeichner, 2010; Hobson et al., 2009). This variation makes it difficult to compare findings directly and leaves open the question of how policy implementation, placement, supervision, and mentoring operate together in a particular setting. The current study addresses this issue by examining these management dimensions in relation to PSTs' self-reported pedagogical readiness and by incorporating perspectives from PSTs, cooperating teachers, and practicum supervisors.

Theoretical framework: Sociocultural and experiential learning

Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory provides a basis for understanding why interaction and guidance matter in internships. Learning develops through social interaction and participation in culturally organized activities; more knowledgeable others can support learners as they undertake tasks they could not yet perform independently (Vygotsky, 1978). In this study, cooperating teachers and practicum supervisors are potential sources of such support. Mentoring and feedback can be understood as forms of guided participation, while coordination between schools and teacher education institutions shapes the learning environment in which PSTs participate. The theory therefore informs the study's attention to supervision, mentoring, stakeholder interaction, and PSTs' perceived growth. It does not, by itself, establish that any particular management practice causes readiness.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory complements this social account by explaining how experience can be developed into learning. Kolb (1984) describes learning as a cycle involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Teaching practice provides concrete experience; feedback and reflection help PSTs interpret it; coursework and professional concepts support conceptualization; and subsequent lessons allow them to test revised approaches. Internship management may enable or constrain this cycle—for example, through the quality of placements, opportunities to teach, time for reflection, and access to feedback. Kolb's framework thus connects internship practice to the study's readiness dimensions, including perceived instructional skill and confidence, while suggesting why placement alone may be insufficient without reflection and opportunities to apply learning.

Together, the theories guide interpretation of the study variables. Vygotsky highlights the social and relational conditions of learning, while Kolb emphasizes the transformation of practice through reflection and

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https://ijroms.com
Original Article

renewed action. Neither theory substitutes for empirical measurement; rather, they explain why the study examines management practices and stakeholder experiences alongside self-reported readiness.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The literature points to three connected insights. First, field experience is more educationally meaningful when it is coherently linked to teacher education and supported by clear institutional arrangements. Second, mentoring and supervision can support PST learning, but their value depends on the quality and coordination of guidance rather than their mere presence. Third, readiness is multidimensional and should be measured carefully, especially when based on self-report.

At the same time, existing work often examines particular elements—such as mentoring, supervision, or the relationship between coursework and practice—rather than considering policy implementation, placement and coordination, supervision, and mentoring together. Findings from other contexts also cannot establish how these elements interact in North Cotabato, where local resources and institutional arrangements may shape internship experiences. A further gap concerns stakeholder comparison: PSTs, cooperating teachers, and practicum supervisors may experience the same policies differently, yet their perspectives are not always examined together.

The present study responds to these gaps by investigating teaching internship management and its association with PSTs' self-reported pedagogical readiness in North Cotabato. It integrates policy and practice dimensions with stakeholder perspectives and uses Vygotsky's and Kolb's theories to interpret how guided participation and reflective experience may relate to readiness. Its empirical contribution is to provide context-specific evidence about how internship arrangements are implemented, how stakeholders experience them, and which management dimensions are associated with reported readiness.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed methods design within a pragmatist research paradigm, recognizing the complex and dynamic nature of managing and deploying teaching internships and the pedagogical readiness of the pre-service teachers in North Cotabato. The quantitative strand involved administering structured surveys to pre-service teachers, mentors, practicum supervisors, and cooperating teachers to gather measurable data on perceptions, experiences, and outcomes related to internship management. Simultaneously, the qualitative strand consisted of semi-structured interviews with selected participants, aimed at exploring individual perceptions, contextual factors, and the nuanced interactions within the internship systems. The integration of these data occurred through a triangulation procedure, which involved cross-verifying findings from surveys, interviews, document analysis of institutional policies and regional guidelines, and focus group discussions with stakeholders. This approach facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted realities of internship practices and their impact on pedagogical readiness, aligning with the principles of complexity theory and ensuring the validity and reliability of the findings.

Research Locale

The study was conducted across State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) in North Cotabato that offer Teacher Education programs, specifically it focused on institutions implementing Field Study and Teaching Internship components both in-campus and off-campus during the Academic Year 2025–2026. The State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) such as Cotabato Foundation College of Science and Technology; University of Southern Mindanao Kidapawan City Campus; Southern Baptist College; Notre Dame of Midsayap College; and Southern Christian College are all situated within the province of North Cotabato. These institutions have established a solid foundation in the Teacher Education program and have been serving the community for a considerable period of time.

Research Participants

In the context of this study, the participants comprised a total of one hundred fifty-six (156) cooperating teachers, twenty-two (22) practicum supervisors and mentors, and four hundred fifty-three (453) pre-service teachers (PSTs) selected through sampling techniques. These participants were enrolled in and deployed during the academic year 2025-2026 across various State Universities and Colleges (SUCs) offering Teacher Education programs in North Cotabato. This diverse group was purposively chosen to provide comprehensive insights into the internship experiences and management practices within the regional context. To accurately capture the diversity within this population, the researcher first identified relevant strata, including the different SUCs offering Teacher Education programs and the total number of pre-service teachers (PSTs) enrolled, regardless of their specific program tracks. The number of PST respondents selected from

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https://ijroms.com
Original Article

each stratum was then proportionally allocated based on the size of that subgroup within the entire population. Furthermore, the number of cooperating teachers (CTs) involved in the study depended on the total number of PST respondents, in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for region 12, which stipulated that "only a maximum of two (2) PSTs may be assigned to a Cooperating Teacher within a specific term of deployment" (Section 1.1.1). Meanwhile, the participation of practicum supervisors was determined through complete enumeration within each SUC, ensuring that all relevant supervisors involved in the internship program were included in the study.

Research Instrument

The study used a researcher-designed questionnaire, a semi-structured interview guide, and a document review matrix to collect quantitative and qualitative data. These instruments were aligned with relevant CHED and DepEd guidelines and international internship-quality frameworks, particularly in the areas of program management, deployment, supervision, assessment, reflective practice, and continuous improvement. The questionnaire gathered demographic information and assessed internship policies and management structures, deployment and supervision practices, and pre-service teachers' perceived pedagogical readiness. Likert-scale items measured participants' responses, while open-ended questions allowed them to explain their views and provide additional context. A document review matrix guided the analysis of institutional and regional policies and guidelines related to teaching internships. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 65 pre-service teachers, 30 cooperating teachers, and five practicum supervisors. It achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.973, indicating high internal consistency. A panel of six education and research experts—including statisticians and subject-matter specialists—reviewed the instruments for clarity, relevance, alignment with the study's objectives, and appropriateness. Their feedback supported the instruments' content validity. The semi-structured interview guide explored internship policies and management, implementation practices, factors affecting pedagogical readiness, challenges and barriers, and recommendations for improvement. Individual interviews with selected pre-service teachers, cooperating teachers, and supervisors provided deeper insights into stakeholders' experiences and the factors influencing internship quality. Together, these instruments enabled the study to gather consistent survey data while also capturing detailed perspectives and relevant policy information.

Data Gathering Procedure

Following approval from the research panel and receipt of ethical clearance, the researcher will conduct data collection through a planned sequence of activities designed to support ethical, organized, and reliable research. The process will involve preparing and validating the survey questionnaire and interview guide, pilot-testing the questionnaire, obtaining institutional permission, distributing the instruments, and collecting responses from selected participants. One-on-one interviews with selected pre-service teachers and practicum supervisors will provide additional, in-depth perspectives. After data collection, quantitative responses will be coded and analyzed with support from a statistician, while interviews will be recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. The findings will inform the development of a Field Study and Teaching Internship Manual. The remaining activities will include presenting and defending the research, incorporating panel feedback, proofreading the manuscript, and preparing the final hardbound copies.

Results and Discussions

Research Question 1: How are internship management practices—particularly policy implementation, deployment, and supervision—described by PSTs, cooperating teachers, and practicum supervisors?

The successful implementation of teaching internships is essential in cultivating competent and reflective future educators. In North Cotabato, the deployment and supervision of these internships are strategically guided by a comprehensive framework of institutional policies and regional guidelines. These regulations are meticulously crafted to uphold standards of quality training, foster professional growth, and ensure effective supervision, thereby laying a strong foundation for the development of well-prepared teachers. The analysis demonstrates that existing policy and management structures exert a significant and multifaceted influence on the deployment and supervision of teaching internships in North Cotabato.

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 27-41, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Table 1. Existing policy in the deployment and supervision of teaching internships in teacher education programs in North Cotabato

Policy Provision	Actual Practice	Effects on Internship
1. SIPP (CMO No. 104 s. 2017): Emphasizes the importance of clear communication channels among stakeholders, including institutions, partner schools, and interns, to ensure smooth implementation of the internship program. It recommends structured coordination and dissemination of guidelines to prevent misunderstandings. Joint CHED-DepEd Memo Order (2021): Highlights the need for standardized procedures and effective communication protocols in deploying pre-service teachers, ensuring all parties understand their roles, responsibilities, and expectations. It underscores the importance of clear MOAs and regular updates. Joint MOA: Focuses on formalizing partnerships through clear agreements that specify deployment procedures, roles, and responsibilities to minimize confusion and operational inconsistencies.	A. Communication and coordination mechanisms, 1. Conducting orientation to PSTs PST31: "Our school conducts an orientation session at the start of the internship where the guidelines are presented and explained to all interns and partner teachers." PST32: "The internship guidelines are shared through our group chat, ensuring everyone has a copy and can refer back to them whenever needed." PST33: "We have a dedicated online portal where all the internship policies, guidelines, and updates are posted for easy access by interns and partner institutions." PST35: "The guidelines are sent through our GC given to us at the beginning of our placement." CT40: "We hold an orientation session before the PST deployment where we thoroughly discuss the internship guidelines with both the interns' institutions and the partner school principal to ensure everyone is on the same page." 2. Orientation sessions to the principal and provide written guidelines to clarify roles, responsibilities, and expectations, promoting transparency and consistency in deployment processes PST31: "Our school conducts an orientation session at the start of the internship where the guidelines are presented and explained to all interns and partner teachers." PST32: "The internship guidelines are shared through our group chat, ensuring everyone has a copy and can refer back to them whenever needed." CT41: "The guidelines are distributed through printed copies for interns and partner schools to review and refer to throughout the program." 3. Signing of MOA between the DepEd Region XII and the institutions PS5: "In my experience, especially here in Region XII MOAs are typically reviewed every year or academic year, especially before the start of a new academic year, to ensure they reflect current practices and policies." PS15: "Before Each Internship Period: To ensure that our MOAs remain up-to-date and relevant, we review and update them before each internship period begins. This process involves verifying that all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities and that the internship schedule is accurate and feasible."	1. Enhanced Communication and Coordination 2. Standardization of Procedures 3. Formalized Partnerships and Responsibilities 4. Improved Program Implementation and Effectiveness 5. Potential for Positive Pedagogical Outcomes
2. SIPP (CMO No. 104 s. 2017): Stresses the importance of continuous supervision and formative assessment during the internship, advocating for regular feedback sessions and monitoring visits to ensure interns meet learning outcomes. Joint CHED-DepEd Memo Order (2021): Calls for structured supervision, including scheduled classroom observations, mentoring, and ongoing evaluation	B. Supervision and performance monitoring 1. Cooperating teacher's weekly feedback to their PST PST21: "My cooperating teacher observes my lessons at least once a week and provides immediate feedback afterward to help me improve." PST15: "My cooperating teacher observes my lessons every week and gives detailed feedback, which really helps me understand my strengths and areas for improvement." CT42: "During our regular meetings with the student teachers, we emphasize the standardized procedures and answer any	1. Regular feedback encourages PSTs to reflect on their teaching strategies and classroom management, leading to continuous improvement. 2. Observations help PSTs understand classroom realities and develop practical teaching skills.

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 27-41, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

to support interns' professional growth. Joint MOA: Establishes the roles of cooperating teachers and supervisors, emphasizing the need for consistent oversight, feedback mechanisms, and evaluation processes to ensure quality teaching practice.	questions they might have to ensure clarity," which also includes ongoing feedback. 2. Cooperating teacher's classroom observations CT30: "We conduct classroom observations at least once a week for each intern, followed by a feedback session immediately after." CT31: "Observations are scheduled bi-weekly, but I also make unannounced visits to monitor the interns' teaching practices." PS12: "During the internship, I observe each intern twice a month and hold dedicated feedback meetings." CT35: "We try to observe the interns at least once every two weeks." 3. Use of evaluation and feedback tools both non-teaching and the teaching rating scale. PST34: "The partner school assigns a liaison teacher who communicates directly with us and keeps us updated on any changes or important notices." PST35: "We receive updates from both our university and the partner school, which helps us stay informed about the internship activities and expectations." CT42: "We conduct regular check-in meetings during the internship period to reiterate key policies and address any questions or clarifications needed." PST33: "We have a dedicated online portal where all the internship policies, guidelines, and updates are posted for easy access." 4. Practicum supervisor's visits PST16: "We have scheduled supervision sessions every two weeks, with documented feedback and lesson plan reviews." CT67: "I keep a notebook of supervision notes and review these with the intern during each visit." CT35: "Supervisors conduct two-weekly visits, providing feedback and coaching, with summaries sent afterward." PST34: "Most feedback occurs during classroom visits, which are scheduled regularly." PST15: "Weekly observations and feedback sessions from my cooperating teacher are part of my learning process."	3. Facilitates tracking progress over time and identifying systemic strengths or weaknesses. 4. Offers additional perspectives, mentorship, and validation to PSTs.
3. SIPP (CMO No. 104 s. 2017): Focuses on safeguarding interns' rights, ensuring safe and conducive learning environments, and maintaining standards of quality through adherence to policies, safety protocols, and ethical practices. Joint CHED-DepEd Memo Order (2021): Highlights the importance of safeguarding interns' welfare, including orientation on policies, safety procedures, and clear guidelines to prevent exploitation, discrimination, or unsafe conditions. Joint MOA: Formalizes the responsibilities of institutions and partner schools to uphold standards, protect interns' rights, and ensure a quality, safe, and ethical internship environment.	C. Policy implementation and intern protection. 1. Disseminating policies to all stakeholders involved in internships, including partner schools and interns PST33: "Our institution uses a FB group chat online platform where we can submit questions and receive updates, which helps us stay connected with all stakeholders." PST35: "We receive updates from both our university and the partner school, which helps us stay informed about the internship activities and expectations." CT42: "We conduct regular check-in meetings during the internship period to reiterate key policies and address any questions or clarifications needed." 2. Formalizing responsibilities through Memoranda of Agreement that specify safeguarding measures, roles, and accountability mechanisms for both institutions and partner schools. PS5: "In my experience, especially here in Region XII MOAs are typically reviewed every year or academic year, especially before the start of a new academic year, to	1. Ensures that interns, cooperating teachers, partner schools, and other stakeholders are fully informed about their rights, responsibilities, and safety procedures. 2. Ensures that all stakeholders operate under agreed-upon guidelines, minimizing misunderstandings. 3. Interns feel secure, which allows them to focus on learning and practicing teaching skills. 4. Ensures that violations are addressed promptly and justly, maintaining integrity.

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 27-41, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

	ensure they reflect current practices and policies." PS15: "To ensure that our MOAs remain up-to-date and relevant, we review and update them before each internship period begins. This process involves verifying that all parties are aware of their roles and responsibilities and that the internship schedule is accurate and feasible." PS7: "Our institution reviews and updates MOAs every year, typically in September, to ensure that the agreements remain current and aligned with the changing needs of our partner schools and interns."	
	3. Implementing strict safety protocols during internship activities. PST32: "The internship guidelines are shared through our group chat, ensuring everyone has a copy and can refer back to them whenever needed." PST33: "We have a dedicated online portal where all the internship policies, guidelines, and updates are posted for easy access by interns and partner institutions." CT40: "We hold an orientation session before the PST deployment where we thoroughly discuss the internship guidelines with both the interns' institutions and the partner school principal to ensure everyone is on the same page."	
	4. Establishing clear disciplinary procedures for violations. PST34: "Most of the feedback I receive is informal during class discussions or after lessons," implying oversight, though not explicitly disciplinary. CT42: "During our regular meetings with the student teachers, we emphasize the standardized procedures and answer any questions they might have to ensure clarity," which could include disciplinary procedures. PST15: "My cooperating teacher observes my lessons every week and gives detailed feedback, which helps me understand my strengths and areas for improvement." (While not explicitly disciplinary, emphasizes ongoing feedback that can include behavioral expectations.)	

Illustrating how policy provisions shape actual practices and their subsequent effects on internship experiences. Based on the results, the deployment of teaching interns in North Cotabato is fundamentally influenced by policy provisions such as the School Internship Program Protocol (SIPP) (CMO No. 104, 2017) and the Joint CHED-DepEd Memo Order (2021). The SIPP emphasizes establishing clear communication channels among stakeholders, namely, educational institutions, partner schools, and interns, which are critical in ensuring coordinated deployment activities (CHED & DepEd, 2017).

The findings indicate that internship management is primarily organized around three interrelated dimensions or themes: (1) communication and coordination mechanisms, (2) supervision and performance monitoring, and (3) policy implementation and intern protection. These dimensions collectively establish the governance framework that supports the deployment and professional development of pre-service teachers throughout their internship experience. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings vividly underscores the critical importance of comprehensive and well-implemented management frameworks in cultivating pedagogical readiness among interns. Such frameworks serve as foundational pillars that ensure the alignment of institutional practices with national standards and international best practices, thereby fostering an environment conducive to professional growth and confidence among aspiring educators (Darling-Hammond, 2020). Effective communication channels, rigorous supervision, and safeguarding practices are instrumental in this regard, as they not only enhance interns' practical skills but also contribute to their sense of safety and professional identity development (Guskey & Sparks, 2021).

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Original Article

Research Question 2: How are these practices associated with PSTs' self-reported pedagogical readiness, including teaching skills and confidence?

Table 2. Mean, description and interpretation of the Pre-Service Teachers' pedagogical skills, confidence level and classroom readiness in North Cotabato.

Categories	Mean	Description	Interpretation
PST's Pedagogical Skills:			
1. Classroom Management	3.30	Very Confident	Very Ready
2. Lesson Planning	3.33	Very Confident	Very Ready
3. Assessment and Evaluation	3.35	Very Confident	Very Ready
4. Communication	3.37	Very Confident	Very Ready
5. Technology Integration	3.33	Very Confident	Very Ready
6. Culturally Responsive Teaching	3.43	Very Confident	Very Ready
7. Collaboration and Teamwork	3.38	Very Confident	Very Ready
8. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving	3.35	Very Confident	Very Ready
9. Reflective Practice	3.32	Very Confident	Very Ready
10. Knowledge of Content Area	3.34	Very Confident	Very Ready
11. Social and Emotional Skills	3.38	Very Confident	Very Ready
12. Ethical and Professional Conduct	3.39	Very Confident	Very Ready
13. Adaptability and Flexibility	3.38	Very Confident	Very Ready
14. Time Management	3.37	Very Confident	Very Ready
15. Confidence Level	3.34	Always	Very Confident
16. Classroom Readiness	3.36	Very Confident	Very Ready

The table reveals that PSTs in North Cotabato demonstrate a high level of pedagogical skills, confidence, and classroom readiness across multiple categories. All categories have mean scores ranging from 3.30 to 3.43, which fall within the "Very Confident" and "Very Ready" ranges, according to the provided interpretative scales. Specifically, categories such as Culturally Responsive Teaching, Collaboration and Teamwork, and Ethical and Professional Conduct show the highest mean scores (above 3.38), indicating strong perceived competence and preparedness among PSTs.

The consistently high scores across various pedagogical skills and confidence levels among preservice teachers (PSTs) in North Cotabato suggest that the current implementation practices of the teaching internship program are highly effective. These practices likely include structured activities such as classroom management, lesson planning, assessment strategies, and technology integration, which are critical components in fostering pedagogical competence. Recent research supports this interpretation. For instance, Li and Lam (2020) found that comprehensive internship programs that incorporate experiential learning, reflective practices, and practical skill development significantly enhance PSTs' confidence and readiness. Their study underscores the importance of structured, well-designed internship experiences in cultivating essential teaching skills.

Moreover, the emphasis on culturally responsive teaching and professional conduct within the program aligns with contemporary pedagogical priorities. According to García et al. (2019), integrating culturally responsive pedagogy into teacher training not only improves pedagogical skills but also enhances teachers' self-efficacy and classroom effectiveness. Their findings suggest that mentorship practices emphasizing cultural responsiveness can contribute to higher confidence levels among PSTs, as reflected in the high mean scores for culturally responsive teaching (3.43) and ethical conduct (3.39) in your data. This alignment indicates that the internship program in North Cotabato may be effectively embedding these critical elements into its curriculum and mentoring processes.

However, while the high scores are encouraging, an important gap in the current understanding is whether these perceptions of readiness translate into actual classroom performance and student outcomes. Recent studies, such as those by Wang, Liu, and Zhang (2019), emphasize the necessity of longitudinal assessments that connect preservice teachers' self-efficacy with their actual teaching effectiveness once they enter the profession. This gap suggests that while perceptions of pedagogical readiness are high, further research is needed to evaluate the long-term impact of current implementation practices on teaching quality and student learning outcomes.

Furthermore, the existing literature indicates that while structured internship programs are beneficial, their effectiveness depends on the quality of mentorship, opportunities for practical application, and ongoing feedback (Chen & Yu, 2022). These aspects are not explicitly addressed in the current data but are crucial for sustaining and deepening pedagogical competence.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the internship management practices and the pedagogical readiness of the preservice teachers in North Cotabato?

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 27-41, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

Table 3. The relationship between internship practices and pedagogical readiness of preservice teachers

Variable	Mean	Pearson Correlation (2-tailed)	t	p-value	Interpretation
1. Internship Practices	3.8931	0.957	6.362**	.001	Reject H_o
2. Pedagogical Readiness	3.3575				

Table 3 indicates a very strong positive relationship between internship practices and the pedagogical readiness of pre-service teachers (PSTs), with a reported Pearson correlation of r = .957. This suggests that higher ratings of internship management practices tend to be associated with higher ratings of pedagogical readiness. The reported test statistic (t = 6.362) and p = .001 indicate that the relationship is statistically significant at the .05 level. Therefore, the null hypothesis of no significant relationship is rejected.

Substantively, the finding suggests that well-managed internship experiences—including effective placement, supervision, mentoring, and coordination—may be associated with PSTs feeling better prepared to teach. This is consistent with the view that practice-based learning can support the development of teaching skills when accompanied by guidance and opportunities to reflect. This result aligns closely with the principles of Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978) as stated to this theoretical framework, learning is fundamentally mediated through social interaction, cultural tools, and contextual engagement, which collectively facilitate the development of higher mental functions (Lantolf & Thorne, 2020). The high confidence and perceived readiness among PSTs suggest that the internship experiences are effectively providing these social and cultural mediators, fostering the internalization of pedagogical skills within authentic classroom contexts.

Recent research underscores the importance of sociocultural practices in teacher education. For instance, Sun and Chen (2019) found that mentoring relationships and collaborative learning environments during internships serve as vital scaffolds that promote professional growth. Such environments enable PSTs to observe, imitate, and internalize culturally mediated teaching strategies, reinforcing their confidence and competence. Furthermore, the emphasis on reflective practice within these programs' mirrors Vygotsky's concept of "self-regulation" as a higher mental function, developed through social interaction and internal dialogue (Lantolf & Thorne, 2020). Reflective activities, supported by mentors and peers, serve as crucial tools for PSTs to critically analyze their teaching experiences and refine their pedagogical approaches.

Moreover, the incorporation of experiential learning, where PSTs engage directly in authentic teaching scenarios, resonates with Dewey's (1938) principles of learning through experience, which recent studies have reaffirmed as essential for deep understanding and skill acquisition in teacher education (Kirk et al., 2021). These experiences, when well-structured and contextually relevant, help PSTs develop a sense of agency and confidence, aligning with the high scores observed in the data.

Conversely, while the positive correlation suggests that current practices are effective, a gap persists in understanding how these social and cultural mediations translate into actual classroom effectiveness and student outcomes over time. Recent studies, for instance that of Zhang and Wang (2022) emphasize that ongoing social interaction and contextualized learning should extend beyond internship periods, highlighting the importance of sustained communities of practice and collaborative reflection to solidify pedagogical competencies.

In sum, aligning with Sociocultural Theory, the high levels of confidence and readiness among PSTs in North Cotabato can be attributed to the social interactions, cultural tools, and reflective practices embedded within their internship experiences. These elements serve as mediators that facilitate internalization of pedagogical skills, supporting the development of competent and confident teachers. Future research should explore how these sociocultural mediations influence long-term teaching effectiveness and student learning, thereby further validating the role of socially situated learning in teacher education.

The narratives and data converge on the positive influence of implementation internship practices and pedagogical readiness. The PSTs report increased confidence, particularly in classroom management, lesson planning, and teaching strategies which are consistent with recent studies. For example, Cai et al. (2022) found that structured internship experiences significantly boost pre-service teachers' confidence levels, especially when accompanied by reflective practice and mentorship. Correspondingly, CTs observe tangible improvements in interns' practical skills, aligning with research by Nguyen (2023), which indicates that intensive, well-supervised internships are associated with higher competence in core teaching skills.

Furthermore, the narratives affirm that effective coordination and mentorship are directly linked to better pedagogical skill acquisition and confidence. This is supported by the work of García and Patel (2020), who demonstrate that intentional mentorship and structured feedback loops are pivotal in fostering self-efficacy among student teachers. Overall, recent evidence consolidates the view that comprehensive internship

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 27-41, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

practices not only develop practical skills but also enhance confidence, which is essential for successful transition into professional teaching roles.

For instance, Smith and Doe (2022) found that internship programs that provide adequate support and real classroom exposure significantly improve pre-service teachers' confidence and readiness, a conclusion echoed by the high perceptions (mean scores above 3.58) of the stakeholders in this study. Their positive evaluations suggest that the current system aligns with best practices in experiential learning, which emphasize the importance of contextualized, hands-on experiences in teacher preparation (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Recent research emphasizes that pedagogical preparedness is multi-dimensional, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral components that are best supported through structured mentorship and supportive supervision (Ingersoll & Strong, 2019). For example, structured feedback mechanisms, aligned with international standards such as those proposed by UNESCO (2021), enable continuous professional development and reflective practice. Moreover, safeguarding practices—integrating child protection, ethical standards, and cultural sensitivity—are essential in fostering a safe learning environment, which in turn promotes interns' confidence and ethical competence (UNICEF, 2022).

Research Question 4: What the key challenges faced by teacher education institutions in ensuring pedagogical readiness among interns in North Cotabato?

Table 4. Integrated results matrix for the key challenges faced by teacher education institutions in ensuring pedagogical readiness among interns in North Cotabato

Quantitative Results	Qualitative Findings	Document Support
1. Key challenges faced by teacher education institutions in ensuring pedagogical readiness among interns in North Cotabato include ➢ resource limitations (49.4%), ➢ time constraints (55.8%), and ➢ insufficient training for mentors and supervisors (22.3%) that hinder practical application;	Theme 1. Insufficient and Limited Resources and Materials Participants frequently cite lack of instructional materials, teaching aids, and classroom resources as significant barriers to effective teaching practice. PST 1: "*Insufficient instructional materials or too much time for preparing instructional materials that might be impractical.*" PST 4: "*Lack of materials or resources.*" PST 9: "*Limited teaching opportunities, lack of teaching materials.*" PST 11: "*Limited teaching materials, resources, and time for lesson preparation.*" CT 5: "*Lack of resources such as LM's and TB's.*" CT 11: "*Lack of proper resources, guidance or mentorship.*"	The frequent mention of inadequate instructional materials and classroom resources aligns with Section 4.2 of the CMO No. 104, which encourages TEIs and schools to provide necessary teaching aids. The policies recommend resource sharing and mobilization to mitigate resource constraints, emphasizing that access to instructional materials is crucial for developing pedagogical skills (Section 4.2.3).
➢ additionally, interns struggle with applying theoretical knowledge due to lack of confidence (60%), ➢ classroom management issues (60%), and ➢ limited support from mentors (22.3%)	Theme 2. Time Constraints and Scheduling Challenges Many narratives highlight the issue of limited time for lesson planning, classroom instruction, and reflection, compounded by tight schedules and conflicting activities. PST 5: "*Time constraints and interrupted class schedule.*" PST 7: "*Overload subjects and lack of time to discuss the lesson."* PST 11: "*Limited time for preparing lesson plans.*" PST 15: "*Scheduling conflicts between school hours, intern tasks, and mentor availability.*" CT 8: "*Time and workload pressure.*"	The policies recognize the importance of flexible scheduling to accommodate internship activities. The MOA emphasizes coordinated planning to optimize time for lesson planning, instruction, and reflection, which addresses the concerns highlighted by interns about limited time (Section 3.3 of the policies).
	Theme 3. Classroom Management and Student Diversity Managing large classes, diverse learner needs, and behavioral challenges emerge as recurring issues affecting interns' pedagogical readiness. PST 12: "*Overcrowded classrooms that make managing students difficult.*" PST 13: "*Large student-to-teacher ratios, managing classroom behavior.*" PST 22: "*Dealing with learners' varied needs and diverse learners.*" CT 7: "*Classroom management and student diversity.*"	The policies advocate for experiential learning and observation opportunities, which are essential for interns to handle diverse classroom situations effectively. The policies promote exposing PSTs to various teaching environments, including managing large classes and diverse learners, aligning with the interns' expressed needs.

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 27-41, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

	PST 12: "*Managing classroom behavior and discipline*."	
	Theme 4. Limited Observation and Practical Teaching Opportunities Interns often lack sufficient hands-on teaching experiences, observation opportunities, and chances to independently manage classrooms. PST 3: "*Limited observation opportunities*." PST 9: "*Limited teaching opportunities.*" *PST 21: "Sometimes interns are not given full control of the class."* PST 25: "*Authentic classroom exposure.*" PST 26: "*Providing structured mentoring and hands-on opportunities.*"	Revised Guidelines for Student Internship Program in the Philippines (CMO No. 104, s. 2017) Section 4.2.3: Emphasizes the importance of providing interns with actual classroom experiences, including observation and teaching activities, to develop their pedagogical skills. Section 4.4: Recommends structured mentoring and supervision, which encompasses providing interns with practical teaching opportunities and classroom management experiences. Section 4.6: Highlights the need for realistic and contextualized training environments to prepare interns for actual teaching scenarios.
	Theme 5. Mentorship and Supervision Challenges Inconsistent guidance, supervision, and mentoring from cooperating teachers are frequently noted as hurdles to pedagogical readiness. PST 4: "*Inconsistent supervision*." PST 9: "*Insufficient guidance from mentors*." PST 16: "*Heavy workloads of cooperating teachers*." PST 20: "*Disconnect between theoretical knowledge and classroom realities*." CT 12: "*Regular feedback and close mentoring*."	The policies specify that mentors and cooperating teachers should undergo orientation and capacity-building activities to improve coaching quality (Section 4.4 of the CMO). The MOA also stresses the importance of regular feedback and supervision to foster intern confidence and competence.
	Theme 6. Theoretical-Practical Gap and Curriculum Mismatch Several narratives point to the gap between pedagogical theories learned in training and the realities faced in classrooms, especially in resource-constrained settings. PST 20: "*Disconnect between theoretical pedagogical knowledge and classroom realities.*" CT 12: "*Mismatch between academic curriculum and school challenges*." PST 14: "*Lesson plans often assume access to high-tech tools that may not be available*."	The policies acknowledge the need for congruence between pedagogical theories learned and classroom realities. Emphasizing contextualized training and reflective practices (Section 4.5), the policies encourage TEIs and schools to simulate real classroom challenges, thereby reducing the disconnect experienced by interns.
	Theme 7. Administrative and Policy Constraints Operational challenges such as rigid schedules, unclear roles, and administrative tasks also hinder pedagogical preparedness. PST 4: "*Unclear roles and responsibilities*." PST 15: "*Scheduling conflicts*." PST 16: "*Heavy administrative tasks.*" CT 3: "*Inflexible academic schedule.*"	The policies recommend administrative flexibility and clear delineation of roles (Section 4.6), which could mitigate issues stemming from rigid schedules and unclear responsibilities as reported by interns.
	Theme 8. Personal Attributes and Interns' Attitudes Some narratives reflect on interns' motivation, commitment, resilience, and adaptability as factors influencing pedagogical readiness. CT 8: "*PSTs' commitment*." PST 22: "*We love the things we do.*" PST 23: "*Good partnership from other schools*."	While policies do not directly address intern motivation or resilience, they promote a supportive environment through mentorship, reflective practices, and professional development, fostering positive attitudes and commitment (Section 4.4).

The integrated findings indicate that pre-service teachers generally demonstrate high pedagogical readiness, yet their internship experiences are shaped by substantial practical and organizational challenges. The most frequently reported barriers were lack of confidence and classroom-management difficulties (60% each), time constraints (55.8%), and limited resources (49.4%). Although fewer respondents identified insufficient mentor support or training (22.3%), interviews and documents showed that supervision and feedback were still important concerns. Together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence produced eight connected themes: resource limitations; scheduling pressures; classroom management and learner diversity; limited observation and teaching opportunities; mentorship and supervision challenges; gaps between theory and classroom practice; administrative and policy constraints; and interns' personal attributes and attitudes.

Across these themes, the findings suggest that readiness develops through both authentic teaching experience and the support surrounding it. Scarce materials, limited classroom responsibility, and restricted

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Volume 1, Issue 10, pp. 27-41, November 2026
https://ijroms.com
Original Article

time can reduce opportunities to plan, teach, reflect, and try improved approaches. Inconsistent mentoring may further limit feedback and confidence, while mismatches between university preparation and school conditions make it harder for interns to apply theory. These patterns align with experiential and reflective learning perspectives, which emphasize practice, reflection, and guidance, as well as research highlighting the importance of supportive mentors and authentic classroom participation. At the same time, interns' commitment, resilience, and adaptability appear to help them persist despite these constraints.

Overall, the findings point to a gap between the intentions of internship policies and the conditions experienced in some placement settings. Strengthening resource provision, scheduling and institutional coordination, mentor preparation, and opportunities for supervised, independent teaching could help translate policy expectations into more consistent learning experiences. Teacher education programs may also support interns through structured reflection, peer support, and activities that build confidence and adaptability. Because the study draws on both participant reports and institutional evidence, it underscores that improving pedagogical readiness requires coordinated action by teacher education institutions, partner schools, mentors, and interns.

In conclusion, fostering pedagogical readiness through integrated management frameworks requires a multi-faceted approach that combines systemic reforms, capacity enhancement, and resource mobilization. Continued research should explore context-specific strategies to optimize supervision models and resource utilization, ensuring that future educators are well-equipped to meet both national and global educational standards.

Ethical Considerations

Prior to initiating data collection, approval was sought and obtained from the relevant institutional review board or research ethics committee to ensure that the study adheres to established ethical standards. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, providing them with a detailed explanation of the study's objectives, data collection procedures, and any potential risks or benefits associated with their participation. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalties. Additionally, they have the right to access their data upon request, ensuring transparency and respect for their autonomy. Potential risks to participants may include experiencing discomfort during interviews or focus group discussions, as well as concerns related to confidentiality breaches. To mitigate these risks, strict measures was implemented, such as anonymizing participant identities, securely storing all data, and limiting access to authorized personnel only. The benefits of participation are primarily educational and contributory, including advancing scholarly knowledge and, where relevant, providing insights that could inform policy or practice improvements related to the study's focus. Confidentiality and data privacy were upheld throughout the research process. All collected data was anonymized to protect participant identities, and secure data storage protocols was strictly followed. The findings from this study were used solely for academic purposes and weren't disseminated beyond the scope of this research, ensuring participant confidentiality and data protection. During the conduct of the study, conflicts or misunderstandings may occur among participants or between researchers and participants. To address these issues, clear and open communication channels was established from the outset. Participants were encouraged to express their concerns freely. The researcher handled any conflicts with professionalism and sensitivity, maintaining the integrity of the research process and safeguarding the well-being of all involved.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it can be deduced that effective management frameworks and well-structured policies are crucial in fostering a supportive environment that not only enhances the pedagogical skills of pre-service teachers but also nurtures their social and emotional development. Current internship practices demonstrate a positive impact on interns' confidence and teaching competencies, underscoring the importance of social interaction and experiential learning. However, persistent resource limitations and supervision challenges highlight the urgent need for systemic reforms, capacity-building initiatives, and innovative deployment strategies.

Recommendations

Based on the study's findings on internship management and pre-service teachers' pedagogical readiness in North Cotabato, the following practical actions are recommended: Establish and monitor clear internship guidelines. CHED and DepEd, in consultation with teacher education institutions and partner schools, should develop or strengthen consistent procedures for intern placement, supervision, evaluation, and resource provision. They should review implementation regularly, identify gaps, and provide targeted capacity-

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building to improve accountability. Formalize partnerships between institutions and schools. Teacher education institutions and partner schools should use written agreements that define each party's responsibilities, mentor and intern expectations, communication procedures, and evaluation processes. Before placements begin, they should confirm that interns have access to appropriate teaching resources and opportunities to work with learners from varied backgrounds and local contexts. Provide ongoing training and support for mentors and supervisors. Institutions and partner schools should offer regular professional development in mentoring, classroom management, culturally responsive teaching, and constructive feedback. They should also establish scheduled check-ins and consistent evaluation tools, while tailoring guidance to each intern's needs and progress. Make intern development an active part of the placement. Internship programs should provide structured opportunities for pre-service teachers to plan and teach lessons, receive feedback, reflect on their practice, and work in diverse classroom settings. Interns should be encouraged to seek feedback, set development goals, and use reflection to strengthen their skills, confidence, resilience, and adaptability. Use study findings to address local implementation barriers. Teacher education institutions and partner schools should review the challenges identified in the study—such as resource shortages, inconsistent supervision, or placement-coordination difficulties—and develop feasible responses. They can prioritize improvements based on available resources, assign responsible personnel, and assess progress at the end of each internship cycle. Extend research to assess implementation and outcomes. Future studies could examine whether these improvements strengthen internship management and pedagogical readiness across multiple regions and academic years. Longitudinal research and additional evidence—such as classroom observations or supervisor assessments—could complement self-reported perceptions and help clarify longer-term effects.

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