

# Transformative Online Mentoring: The Student Interns' Lenses

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**Abstract** The implementation of distance – online learning during the COVID-19 outbreak prompted an online student internship in the Higher Education Institutions. This required an adjusted mentoring strategy suited to the training needs of the student interns amidst the academic shift. This study explored online mentoring through the lenses of the 11 student interns. The student interns' participation was based on purposive sampling and the number of participants was determined based on data saturation. This study utilized Husserlian phenomenology as a design and Colaizzi method in analyzing the data. Significant statements from the narratives were extracted and coded, and themes were formulated. The online mentoring as presented in themes includes communicating vision, putting an online system in place, adjusting online strategies, employing effective problem-solving methods, creating a strong virtual support, and transforming the student interns. These themes were utilized in creating the transformative online mentoring model. It was found out that effective online mentoring requires improved strategies that need to be implemented to ensure quality internship and pre-service education. It was recommended that teacher education programs must prepare pre-service teachers with digital and virtual skills prior to their student internship.

**Keywords:** *Online student internship, phenomenological research, student internship, transformative mentoring*

## **Introduction**

Student internship is the summit of pre-service teacher education. It is where aspiring teachers experience how schools operate, learn the value of professionalism, and manage student learning. It is the most crucial phase in empowering future teachers to meet the Sustainable Development Goal 4, specifically in increasing the supply of qualified teachers. Student internship will provide the fundamental condition for guaranteeing quality teacher education.

In the Philippines, student interns are provided with opportunities to apply and enhance the knowledge and skills acquired from formal education in an actual work setting (CMO 104, S. 2017). Since the outbreak of COVID-19, the Philippine higher education community transitioned to distance online learning in compliance with the implementation of the flexible delivery mode (CMO 4, S. 2020), which includes student internships. The transition from face-to-face to distance learning addresses the interns' unique needs in response to the changing educational landscape. As a process of guiding the interns through this experiential learning program, student internship mentoring is a necessity (Joint CHED-DEPED Memorandum, 2020).

Mentoring student interns is the process of transforming pre-service education students into experienced teachers in the field. Transformative education is anchored on Mezirow's (1995) Transformative Learning Theory to understand how people use their experience as a frame of reference for personal and professional development. Although transformative learning is not a course that can be taught; mentoring can be a vital facilitative process for transformation (Misawa & McLain, 2019). A student internship mentor is an experienced professional teacher

whose role is to guide the student interns to work with young minds (Leatham & Peterson, 2010). As such, developing a mentee-mentor connection becomes important during the transformative learning process (Malkki & Green, 2014). In the mentoring process, mentors and interns use techniques in creating a supportive climate as well as employing creative teaching strategies (McElroy, 2012). Therefore, the presence of a teaching internship mentor is pivotal in the successful transformation process of the student interns (Mustafa & Hassan, 2015).

Mentoring student interns to face the challenges of online teaching is a very crucial task. Added to such difficulty is the shift from face-to-face learning modality to online learning that may impede the transformation process of the student interns, if not addressed. By far, student interns are trained to teach in the face-to-face classroom during their three years in college, thus, they lack the knowledge and experience in teaching online (Trust & Whalen, 2020). It is necessary to explore the experiences of the interns during this academic shift to understand their changing needs as well as determine effective online mentoring. Exploring the perspective of the student interns towards mentoring would help in conceptualizing the practicum process (Mustafa & Hassan, 2015).

Effective mentoring strategies include creating an environment of trust between the mentors and the mentees (Starceovich, 2019). The mentees will feel safe to share their inner thoughts when they have established trust and a feeling of confidentiality with the mentor (McBurney, 2015). Further, mutual engagement and concrete structure have to be used in mentoring. Effective mentoring includes a clear definition of goals, the tasks, routines, and the roles of the student interns (Wang & Ha, 2012). Aside from goal-oriented mentoring, feedbacking is needed as an effective two-way

communication (Jug et al., 2018). Good et al. (2015) noted, that an effective mentor motivates and inspires student interns, which makes them confident with their teaching strategies, classroom management, and content knowledge.

Although the reviewed literature reveals effective mentoring, none explored the student interns' experience in online teaching that would serve as the basis for an adapted mentoring strategy. Hence, this study aimed at investigating the experiences of the student interns during the academic shift amidst the COVID19 pandemic to reveal what makes an effective online mentoring. The study also aimed to design a mentoring model that would serve as a guide for online mentoring practices.

### **Philosophical Stance**

This study is anchored on the social constructivist paradigm which is described as interpretivism (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Mertens, 2015), where individuals who are experiencing a phenomenon pursue an understanding of the meaning of their experiences. This study assumed that the change of instructional modality requires student interns several adjustments in terms of preparation, teaching demonstration and strategy using media and technology, communication with the mentors and stakeholders, and assessment of learning. This study further assumed that only those who have first-hand knowledge as student interns will understand this transition, thus, their experiences are need to be explored. Understanding the participants' experiences and views of the situation will help determine what needs to change in terms of mentoring as Lewin (1947), in his Theory of Change, recognized this phase as the unfreezing stage.

The axiological, epistemological, ontological, and methodological stance of this research are anchored on the perspective of qualitative study, particularly

phenomenological in nature, (Husserl, 1920) which emphasizes that reality is captured in the lived experiences. In the naturalist perspective and argued by Husserl in Bhenke (2020), the phenomenon is directly experienced by the person experiencing the phenomenon (Bhenke, 2020). Observation and measurement may not be enough to articulate reality, since the truth is caught in the lenses of the individuals experiencing the phenomenon. Although the reality can be generalized on the basis that human beings have parallel human emotions, what triggers these emotions differ from person to person. Therefore, the reality is multiple, not single, thus, interpretations have to be humanistic and subjective.

In the case of the student interns who experienced the transition from learning theories of education to bringing them to life in the classroom, they need to adjust and learn meticulously during their internship as their experiences would frame their future classroom practices. This new experience creates a new reality for them, which only they would understand. In the eyes of the observers, the internship phase could be a stage that every pre-service teacher has to undergo, however for the interns, it is a moment of truth that will determine their future.

The shift from school-based teaching to distance–online teaching creates an alternate experience for the student interns as well as a new challenge. It was the objective of this research to explore their multiple reality and to report these perspectives in themes since the ontological assumption of this study values reality as observed through different lenses by the student interns who experienced a new phenomenon and locate distinct and similar experiences. It was also important for the researcher to get to know the participants better and acquire firsthand information since the epistemological assumption of this phenomenological inquiry clarified that knowledge is known in the context of what the participants reveal (Denzin 2012). At the same

time, the researcher established a certain position relevant to the setting and context of the study to reveal the voice of the participants. This study confirmed the axiological assumption that qualitative researchers' values are known in the study (Schwandt, 2003), thus, in the manner of gathering and analyzing the data, the researcher personally conducted the interview and analyzed the result. The inductive method of analyzing and interpreting the narratives of the student interns were utilized to produce emergent themes.

### **Purposes of Research**

This study aimed at understanding transformative online mentoring through the lived experiences of the student interns during the academic shift amidst the COVID-19 pandemic to reveal what makes an effective online mentoring and design an adjusted mentoring model that would serve as a guide for online mentoring practices.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Text**

A Husserlian phenomenological design was utilized in this study. A straightforward and comprehensive summarization and description of the experiences and narratives of the interns was done since the phenomenon is perceived by human consciousness (Lambert & Lambert, 2012). The apriori was suspended by the researcher to reveal the phenomenon using the lenses of the participants. Bracketing was done before, during, and after the conduct of the study.

#### **Participants**

The participants of this study were 11 Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEED) student interns who are purposively

selected. Among the 11, there were eight females and three males enrolled during the 1st semester of the academic year 2020-2021. Purposive sampling was used in identifying these participants. They were the first to experience online mentoring in a certain university in Cebu that offers teacher education and holds a laboratory school. The research participation was based on the consent and the willingness of the research participants. The number of participants was based on data saturation since there are no one-size-fits phenomenological research designs (Fusch & Ness, 2015). They were guided by 38 student internship mentors who are 80%, doctorate holders. The mentors are senior college professors who had been teaching for at least five years. They must have experience teaching Basic Education. Since this study focused on the lenses of the student interns, the teaching internship mentors are not considered as participants of the study, thus no data was collected from them.

### **Instrument**

In phenomenological inquiry, the researcher serves as the primary instrument. The tool used in this study is a researcher-made semi-structured interview guide. In crafting the instrument, the researcher maintained a noema or objective thought toward the phenomenon while recognizing the conscious intent to investigate the phenomenon (Husserl, 1930 in Hirsch, 2015). Further, as the primary instrument, the researcher employed a phenomenological reduction by keeping an open mind and utilizing a receptive listening strategy during the conduct of the interview.

### **Data collection and analysis**

This study took place in one of the universities in Cebu that offers Teacher Education courses and established a Laboratory School to expose pre-service teachers to the real classroom setting.

The data was collected through zoom interviews, in compliance with the 2020 health and safety standards. The data collection occurred before, during, and after the internship, which was purposively scheduled by the researcher during the months of August to November 2020. The interview was done three times for each participant to establish the stability of the findings (Korstiens & Moser, 2018). The individual interview was done at the start and end of the internship. A focus group interview using the same instrument was done in the middle of the internship program to provide an unstructured dialogue environment for the participants to elicit multiple perspectives. This process ensured a holistic representation of the phenomenon that creates credibility for the result (Billups, 2014). Additionally, the method allowed a free flow of discussion and openness. During and between these interviews, observations of the participants including the nuances were noted. Such procedure established the dependability of the results through the use of inquiry audits (Miles & Huberman, 2014), where the same experiences were revealed, in informal conversations, by those who were part of the study, and ensured the stability of findings (Korstiens & Moser, 2018).

Colaizzi's steps were also utilized in analyzing the data to ensure unbiased analysis. The following were the steps included in the aforementioned: a) reading and rereading of the transcripts; b) coding and extractions of significant statements; c) formulation of meaning from the extracted significant statements, which served as the sub-themes; d) analyzing and generalizing the themes; e) validation of exhaustive description by the participants, f) incorporation of the verified data obtained from the participants, and g) presentation and discussion of results based on the themes. The themes created were supported by actual statements of the participants and these were shown to the participants as audit trails (Korstjens & Moser, 2018) for confirmation



before finalizing the result. Such a process ensures the transferability and confirmability of the findings. Finally, the expected output of this study is an online mentoring model crafted based on the themes.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical considerations were observed and implemented before, during, and after the data collection. After going through a thorough review by the University Ethics Board Committee, a letter asking permission to conduct the interview was sent to the Dean and supervisor of the Laboratory School. A consent to participate was secured from the participants prior to the conduct of the inquiry. The consent form was explained to the participants and upon consent, the participants affixed their signatures. Number codes were used to protect the identity of the participants. All data collected were treated with the utmost confidentiality. The tape recordings were destroyed as soon as the transcripts were encoded.

### **Findings of the Study**

This study revealed six themes such as communicated vision, a system in place, adjusted strategies, strong virtual support, effective problem solving, and transformation. These themes are based on the cluster of sub-themes as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 shows the extracted significant statements from the narratives of the student interns, which were coded and clustered as subthemes. The subthemes were considered and the meaning implied by the significant statements to formulate the five main themes.

**Table 1.**  
*The Experience of the Student Interns in Online Student Internship*

Main Themes	Sub-themes	Significant Statements	General Description of the Theme
<b>Communicated vision</b>	Goal-setting	I was very hesitant to enroll in student internship during the school year considering the shift in education. Yet, after the orientation with my mentor, I realized that everything that I will experience is for me to become the best version of myself. (SI05)	Hesitation to enroll in internship but the mentors communicated with them to motivate the interns and set their goals.
	Setting as example	I am inspired by the experiences of my mentor as a teacher and how she wanted me to be an effective teacher. (SI08)	The mentors inspired the student interns of their stories as teachers and set themselves as examples.
<b>System in place</b>	Well-planned mentoring	My mentor provided me with all the information about the class and oriented me with everything at the beginning. She had everything in place. All the topics were laid out and all the competencies that needed to be covered were presented during our orientation. So, we already know what to about everything. Even other TIs always asked us because they did not know a lot of things. (SI04)	Well-planned mentoring provides better direction to the interns.
	Systematizing communication	My mentor called me late at night even dawn to talk to me about the class or gave me some instructions. I am already married so it was awkward (laugh), but I wished my mentor did not communicate with me when I was already sleeping (laugh). (SI09)	The interns appreciate better when there is a system for proper communication.

<b>Adjusted strategies</b>	Challenging interns to strategize	Lesson planning was a bit challenging at the beginning of the internship because my mentor formatted the LP differently, I found out that the students enjoyed interacting with each other using the activities. (SI01)	When the mentors challenge the interns, the interns come up with better strategies.
	Using of online applications in teaching	Getting the students engaged is difficult and I was having difficulty at first using different online applications and tools because our mentor required us to explore and use them, but in the end, I was thankful because the students are more participative and I also learned from my practice. (SI05)	Requiring interns to utilize online application tools made them find better strategies to teach online.
<b>Strong Virtual Support</b>	Virtual presence	I was surprised that my mentor sent me money to buy internet load when she knew that I was struggling. (SI04).	The interns appreciate mentors who show them that they care.
	Individualized training	I was cut-off from my class for a few minutes but I was thankful that my mentor took over the class until my internet became stable. (SI02)	Online student internship may be new to the interns but they appreciate the mentors' virtual support.
	Class Observation and Feedbacking	I am not really good in communication, it's my major weakness but my mentor trained me even at night, we had face time using FB. My co-interns also experienced this. (S015)	The interns appreciate the mentors' feedback even when done virtually.
		During our virtual conference first, we have to narrate our experiences and we say something about the other intern's teaching style. This way we always consider the good points that we did during our class and the things that we need to improve even before our mentor tells us. So, after my class, I always assess myself and list down the things that I could have done better. (SI05)	The mentors allow the interns to reflect on their strengths and opportunities for growth.

	<p>I was also shocked that our mentor sent to me a message after my demo. I thought that I would be reprimanded but she tried to console me (SI05).</p>	<p>Sincere support is felt by the interns.</p>
<p><b>Effective Problem Solving</b></p>	<p>The scariest experience was when I deleted the quiz in the Google Classroom but the students were done answering. I was hesitant to report my mentor, but I just did, and she found some way to redo. (SI07)</p> <p>Online teaching is more difficult since when we make mistakes in class the parents can hear us. I heard the other intern was reprimanded by the parents because the answer key was wrong. But our mentor communicated to the parents and the problem was solved. (SI10)</p>	<p>The interns encountered problems during the internship but the mentors showed them ways to solve the problem.</p>
<p><b>Transformation</b></p>	<p>I was just a mere college student who didn't have any idea about teaching and lacked experiences and self-confidence before my student internship. But after my internship, I can already say that I am a person who already had enough what teaching is not exactly perfect but my perspective changed. (SI09)</p> <p>Before I was like an empty barrel, now I am full of knowledge on the things that are need in teaching and as a lifelong learner. (SI03)</p>	<p>The interns felt their transformation after experiencing student internship.</p>
<p><b>Modelling problem solving</b></p>	<p>Negotiating</p>	<p>The interns feel that they have become more confident as a result of their internship.</p>
<p><b>Satisfying training needs based on goals</b></p>	<p>Boosting confidence and professional skills</p>	<p>manage myself, time, school works, and students and I know my worth. And, I have improved teaching skills. (SI 010)</p>

## Discussion

### Theme 1: Communicated Vision

The narratives of the student interns revealed their lenses on the importance of communicating the vision to the teaching interns. They were hesitant to teach online but when guided by their mentors and communicated with the mentors' goals they tried to align their practices to meet the goal and envisioned themselves performing better in teaching online. These can be observed in the following statements:

“I was very hesitant to enroll in a student internship during the school year considering the shift in education. Yet, after the orientation with my mentor, I realized that everything that I will experience is for me to become the best version of myself.” (SI05)

“The process of mentoring as well as the online internship procedures were clearly explained by our mentor.” (SI03)

This finding shows that a visionary mentor allows the interns to understand the mentoring process and the ultimate goal of the internship program. A concrete structure has to be used in mentoring, including a clear definition of goals, the tasks, routines, and the roles of the student interns (Wang & Ha, 2012). This communicated vision helps the interns to work their way to meet the goals. When short and long terms goals are established, mentors and mentees work together to achieve the mutually agreed goals (Podsen & Denmark, 2000). Communicating vision has proven to be effective in translating follower pursuits (Berson et al., 2016). Scholars have unraveled the effectiveness of inspiring people when visions are communicated (Stam et al., 2014). Communicating

vision is one of the attributes of transformational leaders, accordingly, leaders who seek to transform have possessed the charisma to inspire people (Sethi & Adhikari, 2012). Thus, when it comes to mentoring student interns, especially given the challenge of an online internship, a communicated vision creates an inner drive among interns to hone themselves and facilitates a better student internship experience.

## **Theme 2: System in Place**

As observed in the interns' lenses, systematic mentoring gives them an advantage and provides them with better directions during their online student internship. The student interns pointed out the importance of having a systematic mentor. According to them their confidence in teaching weekly depended greatly on their preparation. They said that they were assured and had mastered their lesson when they had enough time to prepare. These are supported by the lines below:

“I was happy that when we accepted the invitation to Google Classroom everything was uploaded and labeled including the topics to be taught, the teaching competencies, their daily and weekly routine, the lesson plan template, copies of the reference materials, the internship forms that we use, sample visual materials and teaching demonstration videos, and others.” (SI03)

“My mentor provided me with all the information about the class and oriented me with everything at the beginning. She had everything in place. All the topics were laid out and all the competencies that needed to be covered were presented during our orientation. So, we already know what to do about everything. Even other TIs always asked us because they did not know a lot of things.” (SI04)

This account implies that transformative mentors create an atmosphere where their mentees can easily follow through with internship procedures even when done online. According to Kazmi and Naaranoja (2014), by creating clear processes and procedures, objectives are met with ease. Having a system in place, the interns were guided better as to the procedures of their internship. Aside from having to teach online, student interns are new to the field, they need more time to study, condition themselves, and prepare for their classes. Creating a system in mentoring does not only help the mentors in managing time and tasks, but also helps the student interns cope with the tasks, and meet personal goals as well as the mentors' expectations. Effective mentoring strategies include creating an environment of trust between the mentors and the mentees (Starcevich, 2019).

Transformative mentoring allows a clear definition of goals by showing the way as they demonstrate confidence in the mentees' ability to achieve goals (Kurt & Lewis, 1987). By clearly defining the goals, the tasks, the routines, and the roles the student intern's anxiety in facing the new normal will be minimized (Wang & Ha, 2012). Furthermore, creating a system in mentoring helps the mentors in managing time and tasks. It also helps the student interns cope with the tasks, and meet personal goals as well as the mentors' expectations.

### **Theme 3: Adjusted Strategies**

Strategic implementation in online classes is a necessary shift to ensure effective teaching and mentoring. The mentors' adjustment to the needs of the interns by allowing them to utilize online tools in delivering the lessons is much appreciated by the interns. These are observed in the lines below:

"I appreciate my mentor's suggestions to adjust to the need and current trends by utilizing

available online tools in delivering their lessons and interactions with the students.” (SI07)

“One of the challenges that we observe during online classes is the students’ boredom, our mentor was right, we need to make use of interactive visual materials in online classes.” (SI01)

Some strategies used in the face-to-face classroom may apply to teaching online, yet, due to the lack of physical presence in online classrooms, the use of online tools and applications would be fitting to introduce to the teaching interns. In doing so the interns’ instructional delivery, classroom strategies and student engagement will be improved. Although the idea of the adaptation and use of technology has been a trend, in most countries, the teachers are not maximizing the use of technology (Albrini, 2006; Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). The use of technology in the classroom provides the students proactive and comprehensive learning environment (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). Since students expect a high integration of technology in the online classroom (Chien et al., 2014).

The use of information and communication tools in the classroom will ensure an active learning environment that is beneficial to both students and teachers. Reisoglu and Cebi (2020) supported this idea. According to them, student interns should be trained to use technology-based instruction through digital tools. Encouraging the student interns to utilize available online applications will help in their transformation. Kraus et al. (2021) explained that digitization as the driver of change and transformation impacts all aspects of human life built on the use of technologies.

#### **Theme 4: Strong Virtual Support**

The student interns experienced many breakdowns during their internship. Not only because of the many preparations



that they had to undergo, but they also have limited resources such as a laptop or strong internet connectivity. However, they felt their mentors' strong virtual support as shown below:

“I was very inspired when my mentor sent me money for the internet load so that she would be able to conduct my teaching demonstration.” (SI04)

“I had to use my mentor's extra laptop, which was her very generous act.” (SI07)

“I was cut off from my class due to my poor internet connectivity but my mentor took over the class without deducting my demonstration score.” (SI05)

The interns were also appreciative of their mentors' constant feedback as a means of support and guidance during their internship as expressed below.

“Due to the keen observation and detailed feedback of my mentor, I was able to regain confidence and become more motivated to do better. My mentor sent to me a message after the class to check on me.” (SI05)

Showing virtual support is highly appreciated by the interns. The mentors' positive and constructive feedback is indicative of their virtual presence during the whole internship stage. Consistent synchronous class observation and feedbacking are very important for student interns to shape their practices. Jug et al. (2018) noted that feedback becomes effective when it is perceived as a not one-directional conversation. Regarding the interns' voice during the feedbacking and allowing them to reflect on their practices is a very important process of their learning. Feedbacking helps the interns to hone their reflexive skills when they correct

themselves. Mentoring provides strong support needed by the mentees. Savovic (2017) emphasized transformative mentoring allows clear exchanges between mentors and mentees that enhance motivation and values. Conversely, Wood (2019) asserted that providing support to the mentees will improve the developmental experience.

### **Theme 5: Effective Problem Solving**

One of the important experiences that the student interns narrated was their interaction with the parents, especially since the classrooms were moved at home. During these times some of them solved the problems on their own and others relied on their mentors. These are manifested in the narratives below:

“Sometimes the parents asked us about the topics for clarification, others wanted assistance for their children and a few made some complaints such as the way the children’s papers were checked or scored, I relied on the guidance of my mentor, and later on when I met the same situation, I already know what to do.” (SI07)

Transferring skills is a way for the mentors to transform mentees. Effective problem-solving skill is an innovative behavior, which every transformative educator possesses. Problem-solving skill is a key factor for the success of personal careers since it positively influences innovative behavior and opportunity perception (Kim et al., 2018). Mentors who model effective problem solving online positively influence innovative behavior among interns (Kim et al., 2018).

### **Theme 6: Student Interns’ Transformation**

Most student-interns noted that their student internship brought changes to their lives. They have evolved. They

were transformed from being a student who was concerned about passing the course and getting good grades to individuals who embody the heart and mind of a passionate teacher. Their experience changed their routine, habits, and perspectives. They become more skilled, more informed, and more committed. Most of them observed that they have better professional skills and become more competent at using online tools which they could use in teaching online. These are observed in the following narratives:

“I become more confident as the days of my internship progressed.” (SI05)

“Before I was like an empty barrel, now I am full of knowledge on the things that are needed in teaching and as a lifelong learner. (SI03)

Good et al. (2015) noted that an effective mentor is transformative; he motivates and inspires student interns. He added that interns become confident with their teaching strategies, classroom management, and content knowledge. Accordingly, mentors who inspire and motivate student interns are effective, since they make sure that their proteges are evolving towards becoming transformed teachers.

Based on the themes, the 5S of Transformative Mentoring model was developed.

## **The 5S of Transformative Mentoring Model**

**Figure 1**

*The Transformative Mentoring Model.*

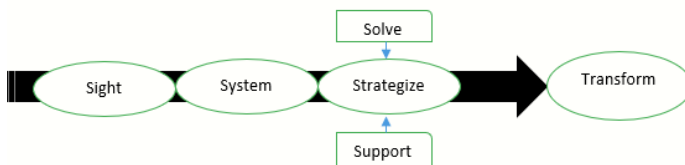


Figure 1 shows the 5S of the Transformative Mentoring Model. This visually explains that to achieve transformation, sight, system, and strategy are important elements to ensure the complete transformation of the student interns. Side by side with the strategies implemented are effective problem-solving techniques and virtual support afforded to the student interns. Since transformation is the ultimate goal of every training program. It occurs when the trainee reflectively recognizes a change in terms of the way of thinking, attitude, beliefs, and practices. Mezirow (1995), the proponent of Transformative Learning claimed that the transformative process is formed through the revision of frames of reference that an individual recognizes in oneself. The student interns in this study recognized their transformation through an effective mentoring process. These comprise the 5S transformative mentoring as follows:

***Sight.*** Sight is the ability of a mentor to visualize the transformation of the student interns at the end of the internship program. This ‘sight’ needs to be congruent with the vision and goals of the university. This “sight” is communicated to the interns at the beginning of the internship or during the orientation where expectations and mutual goals will be set.

***System.*** When sight is established, a system will be introduced to the interns. This system shall be implemented throughout the course of the internship. System includes the internship program, the direction of the internship, the system, and routines, the scheduling of tasks and deadlines, the strategies to be employed, and the expected competencies to be mastered by the interns. At the beginning of the semester, a system has to be in place, including the schedules for all the tasks to be uploaded online

***Strategize.*** Strategic online mentoring is necessary to conquer the challenges. This includes a modified strategy in checking the lesson design, implementing synchronous and

asynchronous classes, interacting with the students, utilizing online tools, and feedbacking with the interns. As experts, mentors possess the know-how that is invaluable to preservice or new teachers (Scherer, 2012). By utilizing an enhanced strategy in implementing online classes and online mentoring that student interns can smoothly shift from school-based instructional delivery to online distance learning.

***Solve.*** Side by side with strategizing is solving problems that will be encountered by the interns along the way. Mentors who model problem-solving skills will positively influence innovative behavior among interns (Ocampo, 2021). The mentors shall model the problem-solving techniques and allow the interns to develop the same skills.

***Support.*** Since mentoring is a vital facilitative process for transformation (Misawa & Mclain, 2019), mentors' support is an essential element in an online internship. Especially since the interns and mentors do not see each other physically, strong virtual support is a major requirement for effective mentoring. This will be done through consistent humane communication with the TIs, empowerment, sincerity shown, and empathy or understanding of the TI's limitations.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This study aimed at investigating the experiences of the student interns during the academic shift amidst the COVID-19 pandemic to demystify what makes effective online mentoring and design an adjusted mentoring model that would serve as a guide for online mentoring practices.

Through exploring the experiences and lenses of the student interns, the themes identified are 1) communicated vision, 2) a system in place, 3) adjusted strategies, 4) strong

virtual support, 5) effective problem-solving, and 6) student interns' transformation. Brought about by the shift from face-to-face to online learning, the themes and subthemes describe the unfreezing state as referenced to the Theory of Change (Lewin, 1947). These further represent the participants' different experience in online student internship, that could impede or bridge their transformation, as Mezirow, (1978) reasoned that the learners' experience serves as the starting point for transformative learning process.

It is revealed that online student internship and producing quality and competent pre-service educators are probable even when done online. Thus, the 5S of Transformative Online Mentoring is recommended. It is concluded that a mentor who could help and be able to transform the student interns, by adjusting the mentoring strategy that fits the needs of the new normal, is effective. Thus, the Transformative mentoring model be implemented.

In view of the findings and conclusion, it is recommended that student internship mentors be afforded with training to strengthen their transformative mentoring skills. Moreover, considering the various online mentoring needs of the student interns, Teacher Education colleges need to orient the pre-service teachers with the vision, mission and objectives of the university from the first year of their education in college until they reach student internship to align personal goals and that of the university. It is also recommended that training the pre-service teacher with digital skills necessary for online teaching be made prior to their student internship. Finally, it is to utilize the 5'S of Transformative Mentoring during distance – online mentorship and validate its effectiveness.

This study explored effective online mentoring through the lenses of student interns. The narratives of the student internship mentors were not considered in this

study. Thus, to establish the rigor, a loop of interview was conducted in a formal and informal setting to elicit multiple perspectives which ensure the stability and credibility of the result. Inquiry audits were used to establish the dependability. Furthermore, audit trails were done to ensure confirmability and transferability of the result.



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