

DOI: 10.2478/jtes-2026-0006

Journal of Teacher Education for Sustainability,
vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 96-112, 2026

Towards a Sustainable and Disruption-Proof Teaching Internship Program: Lessons From the Pandemic and Flexible Learning Delivery Systems

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted teacher education worldwide, raising critical questions about the sustainability of practice teaching as a core component of pre-service preparation. This study examines how six teacher education institutions (TEIs) in the Philippines reconfigured their practice teaching programs during the pandemic and identifies institutional strategies that enabled continuity under conditions of disruption. Using a multiple case study design, data were generated from 13 ethnographic focus group discussions involving practice teachers, cooperating teachers, supervising teachers, and coordinators. Thematic analysis revealed six interrelated dimensions of institutional adaptation: policy flexibility, partnerships, institutional support, capacity building, competency development, and supervision processes. Findings show that TEIs implemented a range of context-responsive adjustments, including localized deployment, flexible recognition of practice teaching requirements, integration of digital platforms, and alternative approaches to assessment and supervision. While these responses were largely reactive and exposed structural limitations in preparedness, they also demonstrated institutional adaptability and innovation. The study argues that sustainable practice teaching requires moving beyond crisis-driven responses toward models that embed flexibility, collaboration, and resilience within teacher education systems. These insights contribute to ongoing efforts to design disruption-proof practice teaching programs capable of responding to future uncertainties.

Keywords: Practice teaching, pre-service preparation, school placement, teaching internship, pandemic

Introduction

Teaching and learning have undergone profound transformations due to the social restrictions and disruptions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic. Educational institutions across the globe were compelled to transition to flexible learning delivery (FLD) systems, relying on online, blended, and modular modes of instruction. This shift represented not only a logistical adjustment but a structural reorientation that required teacher education institutions (TEIs) to reconsider how future teachers are prepared for increasingly uncertain and complex educational environments. Central to this reorientation is the recognition that teacher education must move beyond reactive responses to crises and instead cultivate resilience, adaptability, and sustainability in both pedagogy and institutional practice (Sterling, 2021; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2020).

One of the most critical challenges confronted by TEIs during the pandemic was the conduct of practice teaching or teaching internship, a core component of teacher preparation that bridges theory and practice. The sudden disruption of face-to-face schooling required institutions to reconfigure the deployment, supervision, and assessment of pre-service teachers under rapidly changing conditions. These disruptions exposed long-standing structural limitations in practice teaching while simultaneously

creating opportunities to rethink how it can be designed to function across diverse and uncertain contexts. Practice teaching has long been recognized as a culminating experience in teacher education, enabling pre-service teachers to apply theoretical knowledge in authentic classroom settings and develop competencies in planning, instruction, and assessment (Mufidah, 2019; Mugot and Sumbalan, 2019; Ulla, 2016).

In response to these challenges, TEIs adopted a range of flexible and technology-mediated approaches to sustain practice teaching. Globally, professional education programs shifted toward online and hybrid modalities (Kumar et al., 2021), while in the Philippine context, institutions were compelled to reshape policies, assessment practices, and implementation strategies to align with national directives (Cahapay, 2020). The integration of digital tools became central to sustaining teacher preparation, with studies highlighting the role of ICT literacy and flexible learning systems in enabling continuity (Dayagbil et al., 2021; Joaquin et al., 2020a; Mohamad et al., 2020; Peregrym et al., 2023). At the same time, innovations such as e-portfolios emerged as alternative means of assessing teaching performance in remote contexts (Boholano et al., 2022).

Despite these developments, significant limitations in flexible practice teaching remain. Online modalities have been shown to constrain interaction, limit opportunities for experiential learning, and challenge the development of relational competencies essential to teaching (Almonacid-Fierro et al., 2021; Choate et al., 2021; Jekabsone & Gudele, 2023). More recent studies continue to affirm these concerns, particularly in relation to student engagement, emotional preparedness, and the formation of professional identity in virtual practicum environments (Clores & Manalo, 2025; Li & Peng, 2024). These constraints point to the need for more robust models of practice teaching that can support both continuity and quality across different learning modalities.

From a sustainability perspective, these challenges highlight the need to move beyond short-term adaptations toward more enduring and systemic approaches to teacher preparation. Developing “disruption-proof” practice teaching programs requires integrating flexibility, digital competence, and institutional adaptability into the core design of teacher education. Such an orientation aligns with global calls to embed sustainability principles in education systems, where teachers are expected to navigate complexity, respond to uncertainty, and support learners in dynamic contexts (Sterling, 2021; UNESCO, 2020). Frameworks such as Technology Enhanced Learning Hubs (Turnbull et al., 2021) and capacity-building initiatives in digital pedagogy (Vancell, 2020) illustrate how institutions can build more resilient and responsive teacher education ecosystems.

This study builds on these perspectives by examining how TEIs in the Philippines reconfigured their practice teaching policies during the COVID-19 pandemic. While existing studies have documented the shift to flexible learning and the challenges associated with online practicum, there remains a need to systematically examine how institutional responses are enacted in practice and how they contribute to more sustainable models of teacher preparation. By employing a multiple case study design, this research identifies key dimensions of institutional adaptation, including policy flexibility, partnerships, support mechanisms, capacity building, competency development, and supervision processes.

Grounded in the need to reorient teacher education toward resilience and sustainability, this study investigates how TEIs navigated the disruptions of the pandemic and how these experiences informed the development of disruption-proof practice teaching programs. Specifically, the study addresses the following questions:

1. What were the policies and guidelines of each TEI on practice teaching during the pandemic?
2. What were the practices of each TEI on practice teaching during the pandemic?
3. Were the policies aligned with the practices on the ground?
4. Which among the policies and practices were responsive not only to the pandemic but also to future disruptions in teacher education?

By situating institutional adaptations within a broader sustainability framework, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on how teacher education systems can move beyond crisis-driven responses toward more resilient, contextually responsive, and future-oriented models of practice teaching.

Theoretical Background

Practice teaching, or the teaching internship, has long been regarded as a cornerstone of teacher education, serving as the bridge between theory and practice. It is the stage where pre-service teachers (PSTs) apply the pedagogical knowledge gained in coursework to real classroom contexts, developing professional competencies in lesson planning, instructional delivery, classroom management, and assessment (Espinosa et al., 2013; Mufidah, 2019; Ulla, 2016). Bramaje and Espinosa (2013) and Mugot and Sumbalan (2019) further emphasize that practice teaching equips PTs with essential 21st-century learning skills, including problem-solving, collaboration, and the integration of technology into teaching. These attributes position the teaching internship as a critical culminating experience in the teacher education curriculum, where competencies are tested in authentic contexts under the guidance of supervising teachers (STs) and cooperating teachers (CTs).

The disruption brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic challenged the conventional structure of practice teaching and exposed the limitations of models heavily reliant on face-to-face interaction. Globally, educational institutions were compelled to adopt flexible learning delivery systems, leading to significant changes in policies, supervision approaches, and assessment practices (Kumar et al., 2021). In the Philippine context, TEIs were required to align with government directives while rapidly innovating to sustain the continuity of teacher preparation (Cahapay, 2020; Cuaton, 2020). This shift accelerated the integration of digital tools and underscored the importance of ICT literacy as an essential competency for both faculty and pre-service teachers (Dayagbil et al., 2021; Laureano et al., 2015; Mohamad et al., 2020).

Despite these innovations, several studies highlight persistent limitations of alternative platforms for practice teaching. Online modalities have been found to restrict authentic classroom interaction and weaken the development of relational competencies such as classroom management and student engagement (Almuqayteeb & Alzahrani, 2023), and may not adequately replicate the experiential and social dimensions of

teaching (Sarmiento et al., 2025). Furthermore, variations in the readiness of PTs to engage in online practicum environments suggest the need for stronger mentoring and collaborative support systems (Zhukova et al., 2025).

At the same time, the pandemic opened opportunities to reimagine practice teaching through the lenses of sustainability and resilience. Boholano et al. (2022) identified the potential of e-portfolios as alternative assessment tools, while Turnbull et al. (2021) proposed Technology Enhanced Learning Hubs as mechanisms for strengthening blended learning ecosystems. Vancell (2020) likewise argued that student teachers must develop new capacities to teach effectively in online environments – capacities that are now indispensable in a digital-first education landscape. These developments align with UNESCO's (2020) call for the reorientation of teacher education toward Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), which emphasizes adaptability, systems thinking, and the ability to respond to complex and uncertain contexts.

From a theoretical standpoint, this study conceptualizes practice teaching not merely as a curricular requirement but as a sustainability challenge – one that requires preparing teachers to function effectively in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environments while maintaining the continuity and quality of learning. In this sense, sustainability in teacher education refers to the capacity of institutions to foster resilience, adaptability, and equity while ensuring relevance in times of disruption. Specifically, sustainable practice teaching involves equipping pre-service teachers with the ability to apply professional competencies across diverse and uncertain conditions without compromising learning outcomes. Following Sterling (2021), sustainability in teacher education is grounded in resilience, equity, and systemic adaptability – the capacity of institutions to withstand disruptions, embed inclusive practices, and continuously evolve in response to emerging challenges. The pandemic thus provides a critical lens for examining how TEIs reconfigure policies, partnerships, and support mechanisms in ways that align with broader global agendas for sustainable education.

This theoretical framing positions practice teaching as a key site for embedding sustainability in teacher education. By examining institutional adaptations and identifying both enabling and constraining practices, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on how teacher education can remain contextually responsive, future-oriented, and disruption-proof.

Study Design and Methodology

This study employed a multiple case study design to investigate how TEIs in the Philippines revised their practice teaching policies and practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. The case study approach was selected because it provides a holistic lens for analyzing complex, real-world phenomena (Yin, 2018). In line with action research, this design foregrounded not only institutional policies but also the lived experiences of stakeholders directly engaged in sustaining teacher preparation amidst disruption.

Research Context and Participants

Six TEIs across the Philippines were purposively selected to represent diverse institutional contexts, including private sectarian universities, state colleges, and public universities situated in both urban and regional areas. These institutions varied in their access to technological resources and in their approaches to flexible learning delivery, making them suitable cases for exploring differentiated institutional responses.

Participants included practice teachers, cooperating teachers, supervising teachers, and practice teaching coordinators. Their involvement ensured that multiple perspectives across the practice teaching ecosystem were captured. A total of 13 ethnographic focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted through both face-to-face and online modalities, consistent with health protocols and participants' accessibility. This choice reflects an understanding that the voices of practitioners are essential in articulating how sustainability is negotiated at the ground level of teacher preparation.

Data Collection and Instrument

The FGDs followed a validated protocol that included questions on institutional awareness of practice teaching policies, their implementation, and their responsiveness to pandemic-induced challenges. Discussions also explored how stakeholders perceived the alignment between policy and practice, and how these adjustments contributed to sustaining practice teaching amid uncertainty.

In keeping with the action research orientation, participants were engaged in the research process as collaborators, with their perspectives informing the inquiry beyond the role of informants. Through their personal narratives, they provided meaningful insights into the ways policies were adapted, partnerships were forged, and teaching and learning were sustained despite disruption. This active involvement ensured that the study remained grounded in their lived realities.

Data Analysis

Data were transcribed and analyzed using inductive thematic analysis, allowing patterns to emerge from the participants' accounts. Codes were generated around institutional policies, partnerships, support systems, capacity building, competencies, and supervision mechanisms, which were then refined into six core dimensions of institutional adaptation. The analytic process was iterative, combining empirical findings with researcher reflection to ensure that the results captured both systemic and personal dimensions of sustainability in practice teaching.

Reflexivity and Researcher Positionality

These findings also resonated with our own experiences as teacher educators during the pandemic. Like the participants, we confronted the uncertainties of shifting policies, the challenges of online teaching, and the urgency of practicing empathy in supervision.

The emphasis on compassion – “everybody was relatively kind, considerate, and flexible” – echoed the acts of care we ourselves had to extend to our students and colleagues. This alignment between participant narratives and our lived realities underscores that sustainability in teacher education is not only structural but relational, rooted in human connections and cultures of care.

Findings

The analysis of FGDs with stakeholders across six TEIs revealed substantial adjustments in how practice teaching was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. These adjustments, while initially reactive to health and safety requirements, evolved into institutional practices that enabled the continuity of teacher preparation. The findings are organized into six interrelated dimensions: (1) institutional policies and guidelines, (2) partnerships with cooperating schools, (3) institutional support for practice teachers, (4) capacity building of key personnel, (5) practice teachers’ competence, and (6) supervision, monitoring, and evaluation. Each dimension is illustrated through institutional cases, showing how these adjustments were enacted in practice.

Institutional Policies and Guidelines

TEIs revised their internal policies to comply with pandemic-related directives from the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), the Department of Education (DepEd), and local government units (LGU). These revisions were reflected in changes to deployment, requirements, and implementation strategies.

Case 1 (a state university in Central Luzon) implemented localized deployment to ensure the safety of PTs while maintaining continuity:

“During the pandemic, we are the ones adjusting to the context of our pre-service teachers. We also conform to the health protocols being required by the municipal office. In terms of deployment, we deploy them in their respective localities to prevent them from traveling and prevent potential exposure to the virus.”

Case 3 (a state university in Metro Manila) drew on pre-existing policies and enhanced them to address emerging challenges:

“The policies existed long before 2010...So, we just enhanced them to address the current challenges, issues, and concerns that are happening now in our educational system.”

These cases show that institutions either modified existing frameworks or introduced context-specific adjustments to sustain practice teaching during the pandemic.

Partnerships with Cooperating Schools

Sustaining practice teaching required TEIs to establish or strengthen partnerships with cooperating schools. These partnerships varied depending on institutional

preparedness and available networks.

Case 2 (a state college in Metro Manila) relied on improvisation in the absence of formal guidelines:

"So, during their internship, what we did was we just asked them to teach college students because we didn't have anything. We didn't have guidelines, we didn't have anything since it took us by surprise, right?"

Case 5 (a private university in the Visayas) partnered with schools implementing blended learning:

"So there are policies under which we are going to assist them (practice teachers) on how to conduct classes online using our virtual system."

These cases illustrate how partnerships functioned as mechanisms to secure placement and enable alternative teaching arrangements.

Institutional Support to Practice Teachers

Institutions provided various forms of support to practice teachers, including adjustments in workload, requirements, and implementation.

Case 4 (a state college in Metro Manila) reduced teaching requirements to accommodate constraints:

"The student teaching committee at that time decided to set a minimum number of lessons to be taught. So it was reduced. If I remember, there were only five in the entire semester, and the rest of the tasks were non-teaching tasks."

Case 6 (a private university in Central Visayas) modified the 360-hour requirement by recognizing asynchronous work:

"Well, that was one of the policies that we had to modify just to be able to fulfill the 360 hours...so we had to make justifications. Okay, the students were able to cover this number of hours because some of the hours were done for asynchronous activities, illustrations, and lesson plans."

These adjustments demonstrate how institutions reconfigured expectations to allow PTs to complete program requirements under constrained conditions.

Capacity Building of Key Personnel

TEIs implemented various forms of support to develop the competencies of PTs and supervising teachers in adapting to new modalities.

Case 3 (a state university in Metro Manila) conducted activities to guide PTs and supervising teachers in navigating online teaching requirements.

Case 5 (a private university in the Visayas) integrated the use of digital platforms into practice teaching implementation. A PT described:

"With the [online platform], students had the option to go for an online class or a modular setup. So, during the modular setups, they were not online in Zoom"

meetings, and then when online, they had schedules to meet with us twice a week."

These cases indicate that support for digital engagement was embedded in the conduct of practice teaching through structured interactions and platform-based coordination.

Practice Teachers' Competence

The shift to online and flexible modalities influenced the types of competencies that could be observed and assessed.

Supervising teachers noted limitations in evaluating certain competencies:

"There were limitations in the teaching strategies that we wanted to observe from the pre-service teachers due to the modalities employed by the school where they were deployed. Most of the time, we paid more attention to checking their lesson plans in different modalities."

Case 6 (a private university in Central Visayas) addressed this by aligning observation tools with the Philippine Professional Standards for Teachers (PPST), allowing evaluation to focus on competencies that could be demonstrated in flexible modalities.

These accounts show that while some competencies were difficult to assess, institutions adapted their evaluation approaches to align with the available modes of teaching.

Supervision, Monitoring, and Evaluation

Supervision systems were modified to ensure continuity under pandemic conditions.

Case 3 (a state university in Metro Manila) implemented output-based evaluation, requiring PTs to complete action research, demonstration lessons, and portfolios.

Case 6 (a private university in Central Visayas) highlighted challenges in online supervision:

"It was conducted online. And it took time to actually, you know, we were the coordinator, we had to communicate back and forth and of course we had to prepare students to have these skills."

These cases reflect how supervision processes were adapted through alternative forms of monitoring and communication.

Discussion

Policy Adaptation and Institutional Agency

The findings of this study highlight how TEIs reconfigured practice teaching in response to the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. These institutional adjustments demonstrate that practice teaching is not a fixed curricular component but a dynamic process shaped by contextual constraints and emerging demands. Across cases, TEIs enacted a range of strategies that enabled the continuity of teacher preparation while responding to health protocols and shifting educational conditions.

The revision of institutional policies reflects the role of governance in mediating disruptions. TEIs aligned their internal guidelines with national directives while introducing localized adaptations that responded to the realities of their pre-service teachers. This aligns with Cahapay (2020) and Cuaton (2020), who note that educational institutions in the Philippines were compelled to adopt flexible and context-responsive policies during the pandemic. Rather than merely complying with external mandates, TEIs demonstrated institutional agency by modifying deployment strategies, adjusting requirements, and reinterpreting existing frameworks to fit emergent conditions.

Partnerships as Mechanisms for Continuity

Partnerships with cooperating schools emerged as critical mechanisms for sustaining practice teaching. In contexts where formal guidelines were lacking, TEIs relied on improvisation and existing networks to secure placement opportunities. This finding underscores the importance of institutional collaboration in maintaining continuity during crises. As Kumar et al. (2021) suggest, flexible learning environments necessitate stronger coordination between higher education institutions and partner schools to ensure that learning experiences remain meaningful despite disruptions. The variability in partnership arrangements also reflects differences in institutional capacity and preparedness.

Reconfiguration of Institutional Support

Institutional support for practice teachers was characterized by flexibility in expectations and requirements. Adjustments such as reduced teaching loads and the recognition of asynchronous activities illustrate how TEIs recalibrated program requirements to accommodate constraints. These findings resonate with Dayagbil et al. (2021), who highlight the need for adaptive institutional support systems in flexible learning environments. Rather than maintaining rigid standards, TEIs prioritized the completion of practice teaching through alternative means, ensuring that pre-service teachers could still engage in professional tasks under constrained conditions.

Capacity Building and Digital Competence

The capacity-building initiatives observed across cases point to the increasing importance of digital competencies in teacher education. The integration of online platforms and structured interactions reflects a shift toward technology-mediated teaching practices. Laureano et al. (2015) and Mohamad et al. (2020) emphasize that ICT literacy is a critical competency for both teachers and students, particularly in digitally mediated learning environments. The findings suggest that capacity building during the pandemic was unevenly institutionalized, with some TEIs implementing structured support while others relied on informal mechanisms. This variation highlights the need for more systematic approaches to professional development in teacher education.

Reframing Teaching Competence in Flexible Modalities

The shift to online and flexible modalities reshaped how teaching competence was conceptualized and assessed. Limitations in observing classroom-based competencies, such as classroom management and student engagement, required TEIs to focus on aspects that could be demonstrated in online environments, including lesson planning and instructional design. This aligns with Almuqayteeb and Alzahrani (2023) who note that online teaching environments constrain the development and observation of relational teaching competencies. At the same time, the alignment of evaluation tools with the PPST reflects an effort to maintain standards while adapting to new modalities. However, as Sarmiento et al. (2025) argue, online platforms may not fully capture the experiential and social dimensions of teaching, raising questions about the completeness of competency development in such contexts.

Transformations in Supervision and Evaluation

Supervision, monitoring, and evaluation processes were similarly transformed. The adoption of output-based assessments, such as portfolios and action research, reflects a shift toward alternative forms of evaluation that do not rely on physical classroom observation. This is consistent with Boholano et al. (2022), who highlight the potential of e-portfolios as alternative assessment tools in teacher education. However, the challenges associated with online supervision, including communication delays and the need to develop new skills, indicate that these adaptations require additional institutional support. The findings suggest that supervision in flexible learning environments is more resource-intensive and demands new competencies from both supervisors and pre-service teachers.

Exemplary Practices and Institutional Resilience

Across the cases, several practices can be considered exemplary in sustaining practice teaching under conditions of disruption. These include the localization of deployment strategies, flexible recognition of learning hours, integration of digital platforms, and the adoption of alternative assessment tools. While these practices were initially implemented as responses to immediate constraints, they demonstrated the capacity of TEIs to adapt their systems in ways that ensure continuity.

These practices also reflected broader patterns of institutional resilience. Rather than reverting to pre-pandemic models, TEIs reconfigured their structures and processes to function within uncertain and constrained environments. As Turnbull et al. (2021) argue, the development of technology-enhanced learning ecosystems is essential for supporting blended and flexible modalities. Similarly, Vancell (2020) emphasizes the need for student teachers to develop competencies that enable them to teach effectively in online environments. The findings suggest that resilience in practice teaching is not merely about maintaining operations but about transforming practices in ways that respond to changing educational contexts.

Toward Sustainable Practice Teaching

From a sustainability perspective, the findings suggest that practice teaching must be re-envisioned as a system capable of functioning under conditions of uncertainty. UNESCO (2020) calls for the integration of ESD principles into teacher education, emphasizing adaptability, resilience, and systems thinking. The experiences of TEIs during the pandemic demonstrate that sustainability in practice teaching involves not only maintaining continuity but also reconfiguring structures, processes, and expectations to respond to evolving challenges. Following Sterling (2021), sustainability in this context can be understood as the capacity of institutions to embed resilience, equity, and adaptability into their programs.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Institutional Policy and Program Design

The findings of this study carry important implications for the design and implementation of practice teaching programs in teacher education institutions. As the experiences of TEIs during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrate, practice teaching must be re-envisioned as a flexible and adaptive component of the curriculum rather than a fixed requirement tied exclusively to face-to-face modalities. This calls for institutional policies that are responsive to changing contexts while maintaining alignment with national standards and program outcomes.

At the institutional level, there is a need to formalize the adaptive practices that emerged during the pandemic. These include localized deployment strategies, flexible recognition of practice teaching hours, and the integration of digital platforms in instructional delivery. While these practices were initially implemented as temporary measures, their continued use may strengthen the capacity of TEIs to sustain practice teaching under varying conditions. As Cahapay (2020) and Cuaton (2020) suggest, flexible and context-responsive policies are essential in navigating disruptions in education. Institutionalizing such approaches can help ensure continuity without compromising the quality of teacher preparation.

Strengthening Institutional Partnerships

The study also highlights the importance of strengthening partnerships between TEIs and cooperating schools. Effective collaboration is necessary to provide meaningful teaching experiences, particularly in flexible and blended learning environments. As Kumar et al. (2021) emphasize, coordination between higher education institutions and partner schools is critical in ensuring that learning experiences remain coherent and aligned with program objectives. Establishing clear guidelines and communication channels can enhance the effectiveness of these partnerships and reduce the need for ad hoc arrangements during periods of disruption.

Capacity Building and Professional Development

In terms of capacity building, the findings underscore the need for more systematic and sustained professional development for both pre-service teachers and supervising personnel. The uneven implementation of training initiatives suggests that digital competence and pedagogical adaptability cannot be assumed but must be deliberately developed. Laureano et al. (2015) and Mohamad et al. (2020) highlight the importance of ICT literacy in contemporary education, while Dayagbil et al. (2021) point to the need for institutional support systems in flexible learning environments. Embedding structured capacity-building programs within teacher education curricula can help ensure that all stakeholders are equipped to navigate diverse teaching modalities.

Rethinking Assessment and Supervision

The reconfiguration of assessment and supervision practices also has significant implications for teacher education. The use of alternative assessment tools, such as portfolios and output-based evaluations, provides opportunities to capture aspects of teaching competence that extend beyond traditional classroom observation. As Boholano et al. (2022) note, such tools can support more flexible and comprehensive forms of assessment. However, the limitations of online environments in capturing relational and classroom-based competencies must also be addressed. Almuqayteeb and Alzahrani (2023) and Sarmiento et al. (2025) caution that online modalities may not fully replicate the social and experiential dimensions of teaching. This suggests the need for hybrid models of supervision and assessment that combine the strengths of both online and face-to-face approaches.

Toward Disruption-Proof Practice Teaching

More broadly, the findings point to the need to position practice teaching within a sustainability-oriented framework. The disruptions brought about by the pandemic highlight the importance of preparing teachers who can function effectively in volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments. UNESCO (2020) emphasizes the role of ESD in fostering adaptability, resilience, and systems thinking, while Sterling (2021) underscores the importance of embedding these principles within educational systems. In this context, developing disruption-proof practice teaching programs involves not only ensuring continuity but also cultivating the capacity of institutions and pre-service teachers to respond to evolving challenges.

These implications suggest that the future of practice teaching lies in its ability to integrate flexibility, collaboration, and sustainability into its core design. By building on the lessons learned during the pandemic, TEIs can move toward models of practice teaching that are not only responsive to current conditions but also resilient in the face of future disruptions.

Conclusions

This study examined how teacher education institutions reconfigured practice teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and identified the institutional strategies that enabled its continuity under conditions of disruption. The findings show that practice teaching is not a fixed or uniform component of teacher education but a dynamic process shaped by institutional capacity, policy environments, and contextual constraints. Across cases, TEIs demonstrated the ability to adapt through policy revisions, flexible partnerships, reconfigured support systems, and alternative approaches to supervision and assessment.

These adaptations reveal that the continuity of practice teaching depends not only on compliance with external directives but also on the capacity of institutions to respond creatively and contextually to emerging challenges. Rather than simply replicating traditional models in online environments, TEIs redefined what counts as practice teaching by expanding the range of acceptable activities, adjusting expectations, and integrating digital tools into professional preparation. In doing so, they were able to sustain teacher education processes despite significant limitations in physical classroom access.

At the same time, the findings point to persistent tensions in the implementation of flexible practice teaching. While institutions were able to maintain continuity, certain aspects of teaching – particularly those related to classroom interaction and relational competence – remained difficult to replicate in online settings. These limitations suggest that while flexible modalities can support access and continuity, they cannot fully substitute for the experiential dimensions of teaching. As such, future models of practice teaching must consider how to balance flexibility with opportunities for authentic classroom engagement.

More broadly, this study underscores the need to reconceptualize practice teaching as a system that can function effectively under conditions of uncertainty. The experiences of TEIs during the pandemic highlight the importance of designing programs that are not only responsive to immediate disruptions but also capable of evolving in response to future challenges. This involves embedding flexibility, strengthening institutional partnerships, and developing the capacities of both pre-service teachers and supervising personnel to navigate diverse teaching contexts.

Ultimately, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on the transformation of teacher education by showing that disruption can serve as a catalyst for innovation. The practices that emerged during the pandemic offer insights into how practice teaching can be redesigned to be more adaptive, inclusive, and resilient. Moving forward, the challenge for TEIs is not simply to return to pre-pandemic models but to build on these lessons in ways that ensure the long-term sustainability and relevance of teacher preparation.

Acknowledgements

This study has been cleared by the Philippine Normal University (PNU) Research Ethics Committee (REC) with REC code 04262022-059.

We thank the Philippine Normal University for funding the study.

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