Student Teacher's Perception of the Relevancy of Theory and Practice in Inclusive Classrooms Based on Internship Experiences: External and Internal Support

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ABSTRACT:

The relevancy of theory and practice implemented in the internship program is an ideal condition that is expected to solve instructional problems in inclusive classrooms in elementary schools. We explored student teachers' perceptions of the relevancy of theory and practice in instruction in inclusive classrooms that have implemented internship programs in elementary schools. We interviewed fifteen student teachers and conducted a thematic analysis to determine the main themes of external and internal support. The high relevancy of theory and practice in instruction in inclusive classrooms is determined by the increasing number of creative solutions used by student teachers and classroom teachers in solving learning problems in inclusive classrooms. Collaboration between all parties is needed to prepare student-teacher competencies in a pre-internship program so that the internship experience can become the basis for improving the quality of inclusive education at universities and inclusive elementary schools.

Keywords: Inclusive Classroom, Relevancy of Theory, Practice, Internship, Elementary School.

INTRODUCTION

Internships are a stepping stone for higher education student teachers (STs) to gain direct work experience in various fields within a supervisor's supervision period. Usually, an internship program is a structured program that STs can carry out in the business world, including elementary schools providing inclusive education to implement and improve their academic knowledge and skills (Thessin & Clayton, 2013; Stoddart, 1990). Inclusive elementary schools allow STs to take part in real projects or assignments related to their field of study to study the relevancy of the theory and practice they have received in lectures more deeply (Rasmitadila et al., 2022).

Internships in education, including in inclusive elementary schools, offer a platform where knowledge learned in the classroom can be applied to real-world situations. This practical experience increases STs' understanding of theoretical ideas and helps them strengthen them. Interns acquire various skills, such as technical skills, communication, problem-solving, and teamwork, among others ST with tutor teachers in the classroom, which is very important for the professional success of STs as student teachers who will teach in inclusive classrooms(Calfoforo, 2023; Luk & Chan, 2022). These skills are often difficult to develop fully in the classroom, especially if STs need more theory to suit the needs of inclusive schools. With an internship, STs have direct access to the best dynamics, styles, difficulties, and opportunities in the inclusive elementary schools they will experience (Bowen & Shume, 2020; Washor, 2015). Internships in inclusive classrooms offer broader networking opportunities, and this insight helps them make informed and empowered decisions about their future career paths. Building relationships with lecturers as supervisors or supervising lecturers (SLs), tutor teachers (TTs), as well as classroom teachers, and fellow interns can produce and increase the strengthening of future work, references, and collaboration that are beneficial for all parties involved in the internship.

However, in practice, the relevancy of theory and practice often differs from the achievements and objectives of inclusive education courses. Several problems, such as lecturers still providing lecture material that is not needed in inclusive schools (Morris et al., 2019), including problems faced by schools and teachers in inclusive classes; lecturers also only provide lecture material that does not change from time to time, not following the development of inclusive education which is increasingly complex for inclusive schools to solve (Materechera,

2020). Besides, lecturers must elaborate on aspects of knowledge and experience of inclusive practice from various practitioners or experts who can help inclusive schools solve inclusive problems. Hence, the lecture material is only theoretical and less applicable to STs. Meanwhile, the proportion between theory and practice obtained during lectures is not balanced; in fact, they rarely carry out short practice - class observations - to be able to see the actual conditions of inclusive elementary schools as a form of direct activity in proving the theory given by the lecturer in class. Looking at and proving the theory applied by STs in inclusive classrooms can provide a deeper understanding and insight into knowledge about inclusive education in inclusive schools (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Linklater, 2010).

In the context of the relevancy of theory and practice regarding instruction in inclusive elementary schools, as applied to internship activities, STs have the opportunity to see firsthand the use of ideas taught in lectures translated into real-world situations, which increases the relevancy of their education (Katz et al., 2011; Semken et al., 2017; Waitoller & Kozleski, 2013). Internships take ST education to a higher level by immersing STs in real-world situations and problems of inclusive schools (McLaughlin et al., 2020; Peters Burton et al., 2014). Through internships, apart from the theory contained in lecture material, inclusive education can help STs acquire and master new skills not usually taught in lectures that aim to solve complex problems in inclusive classes. STs are expected to be able to face the challenges that they will encounter in internship activities, so this will require innovative thinking, critical analysis, and application of knowledge. The more deeply STs do their internship by experiencing and integrating all the theories obtained by STs in lecture material practiced in inclusive classrooms, the more it is hoped that they will see the relevancy between theory and practice more clearly. The significant relevancy of theory and practice, especially learning in inclusive classrooms, is a positive achievement for STs and universities as organizers of inclusive education courses to provide an accurate picture for STs when they work as teachers in inclusive schools (Shutaleva et al., 2023).

The importance of the relevancy of theory and practice instruction in inclusive classrooms where STs carry out internship activities must be able to practice all the theories presented by lecturers in lecture material and put them into practice in inclusive classes. All-inclusive education materials must be able to be applied by STs well; it can help classroom teachers solve inclusive problems, especially in learning, identifying, and handling students

with special needs, designing lesson plans and IEPs, and carrying out assessments according to ST's knowledge. The benchmark for success is that theory and practice have good relevancy if STs and classroom teachers work together to solve problems, provide solutions, and improve the quality of instruction, which has been quite tricky for inclusive classroom teachers to achieve (Mansour et al., 2014; McNeill et al., 2004). STs and classroom teachers together gain new knowledge, experience, and insight that can trigger them to continuously learn to solve inclusive classroom problems with all their complexity, indicating that there is high relevancy between theory and practice even after the internship activities are completed. This research explores student teachers' perceptions of the relevancy of theory and practice in instruction in inclusive classrooms that have implemented internship programs in elementary schools.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Objectives of internship activities for student teachers in the Indonesian context

The internship program for prospective teacher students will likely form four teacher competencies, namely personality, social, pedagogical, and professional competencies (Ngang et al., 2015). The internship program is one of the mandatory courses that STs must take to provide real experience to students regarding the instructional process, instructional planning, developing the competency of STs, and carrying out guided teaching. STs need to carry out internship programs because several problems include the low quality of teachers in inclusive elementary schools who need to be prepared as prospective educators to face the challenges of educational change, especially in inclusive education, which is increasingly complex. Based on Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 19 of 2017 (Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia, 2017), teachers are professional educators with the main task of educating, teaching, guiding, directing, training, assessing, and evaluating students starting from the early childhood education level through formal education, primary education, and secondary education. For this reason, skills and quality still need to be improved by current developments and the increasingly tricky dynamics of education in the future, including for teachers in inclusive schools(Bailey, 2005).

Improving the quality and competence of teachers, including in inclusive schools, is very dependent on prospective teachers, who have obtained all aspects of com-

petency, all of which must be able to be put into practice in real and direct activities to see the success of all the theories presented by lecturers in inclusive education lecture material that can be carried out in internship activities. The general objectives of internship activities for STs include, among other things, building a foundation for teacher identity and strengthening academic competence and educational competence to develop potential educators. In internship activities (Adri et al., 2023), STs can carry out (1) observations about inclusive school culture through various sources of information and media, (2) observations to increase understanding of the characteristics of all students, (3) observations to build basic pedagogical, professional, social and personality competencies (4) apply theoretical knowledge to the world of work to increase real knowledge and experience.

In universities with teacher education programs, the internship program is a mandatory course for all STs after completing several compulsory courses that support implementing the internship program to implement all theories in the course material, including inclusive education. STs can carry out internships and apply for inclusive education courses, at least if they have taken educational psychology, student development psychology, elementary school education perspectives, and inclusive education courses. The internship is carried out within a predetermined time, adjusted to the needs and goals to be achieved by each faculty, with several parts of the internship focused on internship activities (Deschaine & Jankens, 2017).

The relevancy between theory and practice of instructional activities in inclusive classrooms

The internship activity carried out by STs and supervised by SLs and TTs is a structured and measurable program to determine the relevancy of the theories obtained by STs in the form of inclusive education learning materials provided by lecturers so that they can be practiced directly in inclusive classrooms. The more STs can elaborate on all the theories they have obtained in instructional activities in inclusive classrooms, the more they gain real experience in solving problems that teachers usually face (Peebles & Mendaglio, 2014; Svinicki et al., 2014). The theory of inclusive education, which includes all the material provided by lecturers, can be adapted to the needs and problems usually faced by teachers in inclusive classrooms. The resulting solutions can help teachers improve the quality of instruction in inclusive classrooms (Iacono et al., 2023; Srivastava et al., 2017). Practice in internships challenges STs to implement all-inclusive educa-

tion materials and provide input to the faculty to adapt inclusive education materials in the future according to the complexity and development of inclusive education (Galkienė & Monkevičienė, 2021).

METHODS

This research aims to explore the perceptions of STs regarding the relevancy of theory and practice in instruction in inclusive classrooms that have implemented internship programs in elementary schools. We used case studies to obtain and examine data in a context where the phenomenon will be accepted in depth. The selected cases can be people, students, or school staff members of the school community (Creswell & Clark, 2017). In this study, the implementation of instruction carried out by STs in collaboration with classroom teachers in inclusive classrooms is explored in depth so that we get the relevancy and differences between theory and practice in inclusive classes. We collected data through in-depth interviews and online face-to-face. We explained the initial description of the topic and asked and then gave some questions to the STs. Data analysis was carried out by coding and creating themes from research findings.

Participant
We involved 15 STs who had taken internship courses and carried out instruction in inclusive classes. The STs involved in the internship are 7th-semester STs and have received inclusive education courses in the 5th semester at our University's elementary school teacher education department. The internship is carried out for four weeks (1 week with five teaching days and every day for 3 hours), and STs get a conversion of 6 credits. The STs we chose had also carried out internship exams, and we were willing to be interviewed for research purposes. Meanwhile, TTs involved in internship activities are teachers who tutor STs in internship activities. Before choosing STs who would be interviewed, we contacted SLs who guided STs during the internship.

Data collection
The elementary schools providing inclusive education involved in this research are regular schools - public schools - which accept students with disabilities such as autism, ADHD, slow learners, low vision, and Down syndrome and are located in the Bogor Regency area, West Java, Indonesia which is one of the one districts that pays attention to inclusive education. During the internship, one ST was accompanied by one TT who was tasked with

guiding and directing learning, as well as one SL who supervised the implementation of the internship starting from the first part of internship 1 in the form of school observations, including inclusive classroom observations which aim to understand the characteristics of all students, the instructional process that will take place, be the result of observations to improve learning. Internship 2 was a learning tool development activity to enable STs to design lesson plans, including IEPs and assessments. Internship 3 was a guided internship that aims to practice internships in the classroom, which will be assessed by SLs and TTs.

We conducted open-ended, semi-structured interviews with STs within one week. We divided each author into interviews with three students at a time using the Zoom application for approximately 1-1.5 hours. To be able to interview STs, we contacted the internship SLs, and they provided recommendations for their students to be interviewed by us. We scheduled interview times for all STs by asking several questions. During the interview, we recorded it on the Zoom application by asking STs for permission first. STs were enthusiastic about giving their opinions during the interview because the topic was related to the inclusive education courses they had received. After completing the data collection, we made it verbatim to be analyzed at the next stage to determine this research's main categories and themes.

Data analysis
The data analysis aims to explore STs' experiences implementing instruction during internships using NVivo 12 to determine the relevancy of theory and practice in implementing instruction in inclusive classrooms. We applied the six stages of thematic analysis suggested by (Braun & Clarke, 2012), which include familiarizing ourselves with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, writing themes, and reporting. Statements were identified according to perspective themes, which were then concentrated, summarized, coded, and categorized into units of analysis.

Ethical issues
Ethical issues in this research are of great concern to researchers and participants in ensuring that all participants' rights are respected. Before carrying out the interview, the researcher explained to the participants, among other things: the aims and methods of the research; length of time and interview techniques; interview topics; the benefits and value of research contributions for

participants and researchers, freedom to engage in and withdraw from; participant demographics; protection of participants' rights and privacy regarding data confidentiality; Ethical approval was obtained from the Universitas Djuanda ethics committee.

RESULTS

The results of thematic data analysis revealed two main themes consisting of external and internal support, which were divided into four subthemes: school readiness, strengthening inclusive education, practice during lectures, and mental preparation.

External Support

External support in the findings of this theme is critical support for STs in carrying out internship activities and can see the relevancy between theory and practice carried out in inclusive classroom instruction and is related to school support. This external support consists of the sub-theme of school readiness. In the sub-theme of school readiness, we found that several essential aspects include class teachers, interaction, collaboration, study time, and the availability of special assistant teachers. STs argue that the problems they face in instruction in inclusive classrooms during internships illustrate the benefits, shortcomings, and connections between theory and practice they face when teaching in inclusive classrooms. As a benefit, STs were not too surprised by the class conditions because the lecturer explained the instruction conditions in inclusive classrooms in the lecture. STs can also work with classroom teachers when they have to handle regular students and students with disabilities who are still at a moderate to light level. One student expressed this opinion:

"In my opinion, many benefits can be felt when teaching in an inclusive class, one is that we can interact directly with the class teacher and students, especially with students with disabilities".

Apart from that, students think that apart from the benefits, there are shortcomings that they feel in instruction, such as handling special needs students who have severe tendencies, such as autism or ADHD, which they have never treated before. This condition requires special attention by both teachers and students while learning new things in handling students with disabilities in the severe category. For this reason, STs think there is a need for special assistant teachers who can assist classroom teachers in handling students with disabilities in the severe category so that learning can be carried out smoothly. Meanwhile, STs as prospective teachers are not

focused on their role as special assistant teachers, so in this case, inclusive schools with students with disabilities in the severe category are expected to have special assistant teachers. Meanwhile, many inclusive schools do not yet have special assistant teachers, so handling students with disabilities in the severe category becomes an obstacle for classroom teachers to be able to meet the needs of these students. ST explained this opinion:

"As a prospective student teacher, in my lectures, I was not directed to become a teacher companion, but as a class teacher who is expected to handle all students, including students with disabilities. But if there are students with disabilities in the severe category, I look the school should have special assistant teachers, so that it can be handled well. This becomes less relevant to the objectives of inclusive education lectures".

Internal support

The internal support theme is the support that can be received by STs in strengthening STs' ability to implement theory and practice when carrying out internships in inclusive classrooms so that relevancy emerges, which can help STs gain teaching experience which will become their capital when they become elementary school teachers after graduating. The internal support theme consists of three subthemes: strengthening inclusive education, practice during lectures, and mental readiness.

In the sub-theme, strengthening inclusive education is a form of support for STs to strengthen the theories they have acquired during college, and it is hoped that they can be applied in inclusive classroom learning by students during internships. So that when STs carry out internships, they can directly apply them according to the material they have learned during lectures. The reinforcement that STs hope for can be inclusive education training to strengthen the inclusive education material they have received during their qualifications. Training can be expected not only to repeat lecture material from lecturers but also to bring in direct classroom teachers or inclusive education experts who deal directly with inclusive practices so that they can increase theory, knowledge, and insight before carrying out the internship. From internship activities, students believe that it is essential to strengthen in the form of training with material that supports inclusive practices in inclusive classrooms during internships so that STs can carry out learning and gain real experience. STs hope that theories and materials can be strengthened in training regarding the importance of understanding student learning styles, inclusive curriculum, instructional methods and media, handling stu-

dents with special needs, assessment, and making IEPs. Student opinions regarding the importance of inclusive education training include:

> "*I hope that there will be a strengthening of inclusive education, which can increase students' knowledge so that they are better prepared to carry out internships, especially when teaching in inclusive classes, significantly strengthening material such as handling students with disabilities, which is the most difficult for me to do*".

STs think that the lecture material in the form of inclusive education theories is appropriate to the situation faced during internships in inclusive classes. However, it would be better if there is a need for further strengthening so that STs are confident when carrying out internships in instructional activities in inclusive classrooms. Strengthening training on inclusive education aims to ensure that STs can optimally learn in inclusive classrooms and gain real, direct experience in inclusive schools.

In the sub-theme of inclusive education practices, STs think it is better not only to provide material in the form of theory, which STs can quickly understand; however, there must be a balance between theory and practice during lectures so the internship can be done well. STs think that during lectures, there is a need for particular practices, such as conducting direct observations of learning in inclusive classrooms, carrying out identification of students in regular classes to determine how many students tend to be students with special needs, creating an inclusive curriculum, designing lesson plans and IEPs, as well as systems inclusive education that can increase STs' experience as well as STs' preparation in carrying out internships and independent teaching. Even though STs have carried out several learning practices so far, they are only limited to observation activities to see learning in regular and inclusive classes. However, it needs to be deepened with activities supporting and strengthening STs' experience in understanding inclusive education, such as education management, staff support, building an inclusive school environment, and providing inclusive school facilities and infrastructure. The student expressed this opinion:

> "*In lectures, apart from theory in the form of inclusive education material, we have carried out observations in inclusive schools to see learning in inclusive classes, but for me, that is not enough to see the inclusive education system as a whole; we need learning practices that can train and improve teaching abilities in inclusive classrooms*".

Practice during lectures is essential for STs because they will gain a comprehensive insight into inclusive education and not only understand the theory but also practice it directly in inclusive classrooms. Meanwhile, according to STs, the sub-theme of mental readiness is very important to have in internship activities, especially in inclusive classrooms. STs believe that mental readiness is related to the complexity of the inclusive classroom. Complexity shows that even though STs understand the theory in inclusive education material during lectures, the conditions in inclusive classrooms that teachers do not understand well in instruction, including handling students with disabilities, cause many things to be adjusted between theory and practice in inclusive classes. However, some say there is a slight difference between theory and practice in internship activities. One student expressed their opinions:

> "*For me, I can match and apply the theory that I have learned in class. It turns out that this is how to handle children with special needs. It is almost the same, not much different from the theory and practice*".

According to STs, mental preparation needs to be prepared, especially in handling students with disabilities both in instruction and outside of instruction. Mental preparation determines how much theory can be implemented in an inclusive classroom. The theory of inclusive education that STs have mastered in lectures can work well when STs can master the class, understand the class situation with all its problems, including understanding student characteristics, handling students with special needs, designing instruction, and accepting teachers to be able to collaborate with STs in implementing inclusive practices.

DISCUSSION

In the results of the analysis, we succeeded in finding essential aspects of this research topic by emphasizing STs' thoughts regarding the relevancy of theory and practice in inclusive classroom instruction based on interviews we conducted by producing two main themes from four categories that reflect STs' ideas when carrying out internships in inclusive schools in West Java province, Indonesia. We found that all STs' thoughts related to the relevancy of theory and practice in inclusive classroom instruction during internships require more in-depth and intensive preparation, which does not only rely on theory obtained by students during lectures but also needs to deepen theory in the form of direct practice during lectures. The theory used by lecturers in the form of lecture material related to inclusive education is relevant and by the standard requirements for implementing inclusive

education, such as the concept of inclusive education, knowledge about types of students with disabilities, identification and assessment, inclusive curriculum, learning design in inclusive classrooms including IEP, as well as assessments in inclusive classes.

However, its implementation in inclusive classrooms requires effort on the part of students, especially in handling students with special needs, which, in theory, has yet to be directly practiced in instruction in inclusive classrooms. When compared with the theory in lecture material, handling material for students with disabilities is the biggest challenge faced by students during their internship. During lectures, the material STs receive only theory, such as types of students with disabilities, learning styles, and advantages and disadvantages in instruction and handling students with disabilities. STs understand the types and characteristics of students with special needs but need help understanding how to handle them directly. This is the primary problem teachers have been facing in inclusive classrooms. When doing an internship, STs are faced with direct practice in handling students with disabilities who cause problems that must be resolved during the internship so that instruction can be completed well. To deepen the results of this research, we have grouped several categories to become the central themes regarding the relevancy of theory and practice in inclusive classroom instruction during internship activities. We have organized all the codes on the thematic map to have two main themes.

First, external support is related to the school's readiness to provide all infrastructure, including classes that will be used as practical classes, the readiness of classroom teachers in instruction (interaction and collaboration) as well as TTs who will guide STs in internship activities, which begins with observation to find out conditions classroom, and student characteristics as well as learning design and teaching practices as assessed by SLs and TTs. The success of the internship program is not only assessed by the scores or grades given by SLs or TTs (Kissau, 2015). However, it is closely related to the relevancy between the theory students have acquired during lectures and the practice they carry out during internships in inclusive classes. We analyzed that the theories obtained by STs in lecture material were relevant to standard requirements in aspects of inclusive education.

If we look at the STs' experiences during their internship, a challenge that requires focus and attention is handling students with disabilities during learning. STs need to increase their insight and in-depth knowledge independently in terms of handling students with disabilities

because, during lectures, STs only get theory from lecturers or from reference sources and do not directly practice the theory in inclusive classes, so when STs carry out internship activities, they feel there is a difference between theory and actual conditions in inclusive classes. Even though the theory is given in the lecture material by the lecturer, STs need to practice directly handling students with disabilities, which can be done in the form of particular mini practices in handling students with disabilities so that when they do their internship (Griful-Freixenet et al., 2017; Lee, 2014), STs are used to handling students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms.

Apart from that, the selection of TTs also greatly determines the quality of the internship, which is sufficient to determine the success of student internships in these inclusive classrooms. STs will be able to find the relevance between theory and practice if there are TTs as well as classroom teachers who can guide STs towards using all-inclusive education lecture materials to solve problems that exist in inclusive classrooms (Bešić et al., 2017; Sharma et al., 2023). TTs provide more opportunities for STs to innovate and be more creative in seeing and mapping problems that are always linked to theories in lecture material to find solutions for STs in applying theory and helping TTs who have been facing problems. The more complex an inclusive classroom is, the more challenging it should be for STs and TTs to practice the theories students learn during college to improve the quality of learning in inclusive classes (Rajuan et al., 2007; Robinson, 2017). For this reason, there is a need for intensive cooperation and interaction regarding the implementation of instruction in inclusive classrooms as a form of collaboration between STs and TTs, which is an activity that is helpful in solving current inclusive practice problems.

Problems faced by classroom teachers in inclusive classrooms in Indonesia, such as the background of classroom teachers who do not understand inclusive education (Andayani et al., 2022), but because of the obligation of every school to be an inclusive school - Indonesian government regulations - cause the need for two-way communication between STs and TTs as well as classroom teachers. STs can apply theory in inclusive education lectures, and classroom teachers gain new insight and experience in instruction in inclusive classrooms, including handling students with special needs (Florian & Spratt, 2013; Moriña, 2017). The impact will be a positive collaboration between STs and classroom teachers who are expected to help each other solve learning problems in inclusive classes so that the more complex the inclusive

classroom situation (Sundqvist et al., 2023), the more the relevancy of theory and practice in inclusive classroom instruction will be tested.

Second, internal support includes findings determining the success and relevance of learning theory and practice in inclusive classrooms during internship implementation. In the sub-theme of strengthening inclusive education, there is a need to increase understanding and skills regarding more functional inclusive education. This means STs will feel all theories about inclusive education if implemented well in direct learning in inclusive classrooms. Strengthening can take the form of training that can enrich learning resources that are more implementable by involving various inclusive education experts, including psychologists and neuropsychologists who are related to the ability to understand the characteristics and handling of students with disabilities in inclusive classes, which has been the main problem for classroom teachers in handling students with disabilities. STs can add and expand the identification and assessment methods that can be carried out in conducting initial screening of students to determine the characteristics of students who tend to have special needs.

This training is essential to carry out, especially the involvement of practitioners such as psychologists, neurologists, and inclusive teachers who have long experience in inclusive classrooms and can provide substantial capital in learning in inclusive classrooms both in internship activities and later when becoming a teacher. The theories obtained in inclusive education lecture material, if reinforced with training on topics that are relevant to the needs in inclusive classrooms for internship activities (Gavish, 2017; Muñoz-Martínez et al., 2021; Shin et al., 2016), STs can prepare various solutions to problems in instruction in inclusive classrooms, so that if they are faced with problems again during their internship, STs can determine the right solution together with the classroom teacher with the guidance of the tutor(Collins et al., 2019; Macura-Milovanović & Peček, 2013).

Apart from strengthening inclusive education through training, lecturers must carry out inclusive education practices during lectures with STs so that STs' skills when facing learning problems in inclusive classrooms can help teachers and provide quality teaching experience to students. Practice in inclusive education courses is expected to be balanced with the theory that lecturers have planned and given to STs (Jackson, 2015). Some inclusive education lecture materials, such as student identification, can be applied by lecturers by encouraging STs to conduct classroom observations at school and carry out

identification as a first step in determining the tendency of students to have special needs. Lecturers must be able to direct and help STs, and the theory given during lectures must be balanced with direct practice in situations where they are still carrying out lectures as a first step in carrying out an internship in the following semester.

Lecturers must be able to design instruction in lectures by dividing lecture activities into two parts: theory and practice. In theory, STs must master all-inclusive education material - theory - and the other part is that lecturers must plan the practice of these theories by dividing and choosing the appropriate time to fulfill STs' rights and obligations in inclusive education courses for one semester. Ideally, we hope that there will be a consideration from lecturers and faculty to be able to add credits if there is insufficient or unbalanced theory and practice in lectures so that STs are expected to achieve a balance between theory and practice during lectures so that they can prepare themselves for internship activities.

Meanwhile, STs' mental readiness is no less critical in preparing themselves for internship activities in inclusive classes. With the complexity that classroom teachers usually face in inclusive classrooms, the differences in situations that should be used with theoretical capital in inclusive education lecture material make it easy for STs to carry out internships (Haug, 2017; Paju et al., 2022; Sturm, 2019). As we explained previously, STs' mental preparation will be better if they have received pre-internship theory and practice in inclusive education courses. Theory coupled with direct practice of material in lectures, as well as insight added from experts, should be able to strengthen students' knowledge so that when faced with problems that arise in learning activities in inclusive classrooms, it becomes more relevant and minimizes the gap or difference between theory and practice that has been present. Furthermore, STs, SLs, and TTs, as well as classroom teachers, can work together to solve solutions in inclusive classrooms, which have so far been difficult for class teachers to implement in inclusive classrooms.

Carrying out internships for prospective elementary school teachers in inclusive schools is one of the mandatory courses that STs must undertake to provide students with direct experience as an accurate picture of when they have completed lectures in the teacher education program (Alake-Tuenter et al., 2012). In the Indonesian context, internship activities are usually carried out in several parts, such as initial observations to determine class characteristics, planning learning, and internship assessments in the form of classroom teaching practices

by TTs and SLs. Suppose it is related to inclusive education courses and implementing inclusive education in Indonesia with the rule that every elementary school must currently accept students with special needs. In that case, it is automatically directed that every school must become inclusive, requiring prospective teachers with teaching skills in inclusive classrooms, which can be obtained through apprenticeship. In internship activities, STs must be able to implement the theory acquired during their studies with internship practice in inclusive schools (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Swanwick et al., n.d.). The preparation of STs for internships must be ensured by the faculty or department, including lecturers in inclusive education courses, that they have sufficient skills, including a balance between theory and practice that STs acquire during lectures so that their relevancy is by the needs and problems that STs can solve during the internship.

CONCLUSION

Implementing internships for student teachers is one of the programs implemented to ensure relevancy between theory and practice in learning in inclusive classrooms. The relevancy of the theory obtained by student teachers during lectures in the form of inclusive education material provided by lecturers must be able to be put into practice by student teachers by the needs of instructional standards in inclusive classrooms, which is a way for student teachers to gain empirical experience in obtaining essential pedagogical, professional, personal, and social competencies as teacher requirements elementary schools, especially in more complex inclusive schools. The success of the internship program for student teachers in inclusive classrooms is determined by the balanced preparation of student teachers both in theory and practice in inclusive education courses by implementing course re-

inforcement in pre-internship activities, which must be designed by lecturers and faculty so that student teachers are prepared to face challenges and solve problems that arise. Teachers often face learning difficulties in inclusive classrooms. The high relevancy of theory and practice in instruction in inclusive classrooms is determined by the increasing number of creative solutions used by student teachers and classroom teachers in solving learning problems in inclusive classrooms. Collaboration between all parties, including universities, is needed to prepare student-teacher competencies in a pre-internship program so that the internship experience can become the basis for improving the quality of inclusive education at universities and inclusive elementary schools.

LIMITATION

There are several limitations in our study. The number of STs we involved only covers a limited number, so the results of this study cannot be generalized. We also did not specifically choose the school where ST interned as an inclusive school that has students with disabilities with specific characteristics, meaning that we are based on the Indonesian government policy, which requires every school to accept students with disabilities, so subjectively we assume that the school has students with disabilities even if they have mild characteristics. We have confirmed this to all STs.

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