

From Struggle to Strength: Teaching Interns' Professional Growth in Culturally Diverse Classrooms

Cyrus Pontawe Casingal^{1*}, Debbie Joyce Dudang Quimson², Liza Lanuza Quimson³

1. Department of Education - Makati City, Philippines
2. Pangasinan State University -- San Carlos Campus, Philippines
3. Pangasinan State University – San Carlos Campus, Philippines

Abstract

This study examines the professional growth and cultural competence development of 120 teaching interns at Pangasinan State University-San Carlos Campus during their practice teaching in culturally diverse educational settings. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research investigated how teaching interns navigated cultural diversity challenges, developed culturally responsive teaching practices, and evolved their professional identities as future educators. Quantitative data revealed high levels of cultural competence ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 0.64$) and overall satisfaction with the internship experience ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 0.62$). However, interns reported moderate challenges in areas such as local language communication ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.26$) and building relationships with culturally diverse students ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.27$). Significant differences were found between programs, with BTLED students reporting higher challenge perception scores compared to BEE students ($t = -3.026$, $p = 0.003$). Qualitative analysis revealed four major themes: language barriers and communication strategies, cultural adaptation and inclusive practices, professional identity formation, and the need for enhanced institutional support. The findings underscore the transformative impact of culturally diverse teaching experiences on intern development, with the internship significantly improving cultural awareness ($M = 4.48$), teaching effectiveness ($M = 4.52$), and professional confidence ($M = 4.55$). Recommendations include enhanced pre-internship cultural sensitivity training, development of multilingual teaching resources, and establishment of structured mentoring programs focused on culturally responsive pedagogy.

Keywords

Cultural Competence, Teaching Internship, Professional Growth, Culturally Diverse Settings, Teacher Education

Article Information

Article Type:

Research Article

Received:

08 Nov 2025

Accepted:

22 Nov 2025

Published:

28 Nov 2025

Volume: 1, Issue:

1 (Nov-Dec) -
2025

Pages: 01-18



Introduction

The evolving educational landscape in the Philippines demands that teaching interns develop robust cultural competence to effectively serve increasingly diverse student populations. In Pangasinan's multicultural educational settings, where multiple languages, traditions, and cultural practices intersect, teaching interns face unique challenges that require both theoretical understanding and practical skills in culturally responsive pedagogy (Casinal, 2022). The PSU-San Carlos Campus teaching internship program serves as a critical bridge between academic preparation and professional practice, yet significant gaps remain between interns' cultural awareness and their ability to implement culturally responsive teaching strategies effectively.

Recent research emphasizes the importance of cultural competence development during pre-service teacher preparation, particularly in regions with high cultural diversity (Warren, 2014; Milner, 2021). However, the transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application in real classroom settings continues to present substantial challenges for teaching interns. The complexity of this transition is particularly evident in Pangasinan, where interns must navigate local languages, diverse cultural traditions, and varying socioeconomic backgrounds while simultaneously managing the demands of effective instruction.

This study addresses the critical need to understand how teaching interns develop professional competence in culturally diverse settings, examining both the challenges they encounter and the support systems that facilitate their growth. By analyzing the experiences of 91 teaching interns from the PSU-San Carlos Campus Bachelor of Elementary Education program, this research provides evidence-based insights into the factors that contribute to successful cultural competence development during the internship experience.

The significance of this research extends beyond the immediate context of PSU-San Carlos Campus, as educational institutions across the Philippines and globally grapple with similar challenges in preparing teachers for culturally diverse classrooms. Understanding the professional growth patterns of teaching interns in multicultural settings provides valuable guidance for improving teacher education programs and support systems, ultimately enhancing the quality of education for all students.

Literature Review

Cultural Competence Development in Teacher Education

Cultural competence development among teaching interns represents a complex, multifaceted process that extends far beyond surface-level cultural awareness. Jani et al. (2016) conceptualize this development as a progressive journey through distinct stages: cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, cultural sensitivity, and ultimately, cultural competence. This framework provides a foundation for understanding how teaching interns navigate the challenging transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application in diverse educational settings.

Research by Jackson (2015) emphasizes that effective cultural competence development requires the integration of structured learning experiences with opportunities for guided reflection on real-

world teaching experiences. This integration is particularly crucial in the Philippine context, where teaching interns must navigate complex linguistic and cultural landscapes while simultaneously developing pedagogical skills. The work of Ji (2020) further supports this perspective, arguing that cultural competence development is inherently progressive and requires sustained engagement with diverse communities rather than isolated training experiences.

Contemporary studies have identified several key factors that influence the effectiveness of cultural competence development programs. Romijn et al. (2021) highlight the importance of systematic preparation and ongoing support throughout the internship experience, while McKenzie & Mellis (2017) demonstrate that comprehensive pre-internship orientation programs significantly enhance interns' readiness for cultural diversity challenges. These findings align with Casingal's (2022) observations regarding the need for integrated support systems that address both theoretical preparation and practical application.

Challenges in Cross-Cultural Communication and Pedagogy

The challenges facing teaching interns in culturally diverse settings are both numerous and complex. Language barriers represent one of the most significant obstacles, particularly in regions like Pangasinan where multiple languages coexist within educational environments (Genishi & Dyson, 2015). Research demonstrates that interns often struggle not only with verbal communication but also with understanding and responding appropriately to culturally influenced learning styles and behavioral patterns.

Westwood (2018) identifies the creation of culturally inclusive lesson plans and materials as a particularly challenging aspect of culturally responsive teaching. This challenge is compounded by the need to balance curriculum requirements with cultural relevance and sensitivity, requiring interns to develop sophisticated pedagogical content knowledge that integrates both subject matter expertise and cultural responsiveness. The complexity of these demands often overwhelms beginning teachers, leading to feelings of inadequacy and professional stress.

Contemporary research by Hora & Millar (2023) reveals that successful navigation of culturally diverse classrooms requires more than cultural awareness; it demands adaptable teaching strategies, strong communication skills, and the ability to build meaningful relationships across cultural boundaries. These findings emphasize the multidimensional nature of the challenges facing teaching interns and highlight the need for comprehensive preparation and support systems.

Support Systems and Professional Development Resources

The effectiveness of support systems in facilitating cultural competence development has emerged as a critical area of research. Heppner (2017) demonstrates that structured mentoring programs can significantly impact interns' cultural competence development, particularly when mentor teachers possess strong backgrounds in culturally responsive teaching practices. However, the quality and consistency of mentoring support varies considerably across different educational contexts and institutions.

Research by McKenzie & Mellis (2017) emphasizes the foundational importance of pre-internship orientation programs in preparing interns for cultural diversity challenges. Their findings suggest that comprehensive orientation programs that include cultural sensitivity training, practical strategies for managing diverse classrooms, and opportunities for guided reflection contribute significantly to intern success. However, the sustainability and long-term effectiveness of these programs depend heavily on ongoing support throughout the internship experience.

Casingal's (2022) research on educational challenges in diverse settings highlights the importance of institutional support systems that extend beyond individual mentoring relationships. This includes university coordinator support, peer collaboration opportunities, and access to culturally relevant resources and materials. The integration of these various support elements creates a comprehensive framework for cultural competence development that addresses both immediate practical needs and long-term professional growth.

Professional Identity Formation in Multicultural Settings

Professional identity development represents a crucial outcome of the teaching internship experience, particularly in multicultural contexts. Research by Nghia & Tai (2017) demonstrates that teaching interns' professional identities are significantly shaped by their experiences in culturally diverse settings, with successful adaptation often leading to more flexible and inclusive teaching philosophies. This identity formation process is complex and ongoing, influenced by both positive experiences and challenging encounters with cultural diversity.

Studies by Watt et al. (2016) reveal that interns who effectively develop cultural competence often report greater professional confidence and a more comprehensive understanding of their role as educators in diverse societies. This enhanced professional identity formation has long-term implications for teaching effectiveness and career satisfaction. However, the process is not automatic and requires intentional support and guided reflection throughout the internship experience.

The work of Alismail (2016) further emphasizes the transformative potential of multicultural teaching experiences, demonstrating that exposure to cultural diversity can fundamentally reshape interns' understanding of education and their role as professional educators. This transformation process requires careful facilitation and support to ensure positive outcomes and prevent the development of cultural biases or stereotypes.

Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the demographic and educational profiles of teaching interns at PSU-San Carlos Campus?
2. What is the level of cultural competence among teaching interns as measured by their self-assessed understanding of cultural differences, adaptation confidence, awareness of biases, communication abilities, and incorporation of diverse perspectives?

3. What challenges do teaching interns encounter in culturally diverse classroom settings?
4. What support resources and strategies do interns utilize to develop their cultural competence?
5. How do teaching interns perceive the impact of their culturally diverse teaching experience on their professional development and identity?
6. Are there significant differences in cultural competence levels and challenge perceptions between different programs (BEE vs. BTLEd) and demographic groups?

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods convergent parallel design, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously to provide a comprehensive understanding of teaching interns' cultural competence development and professional growth. The quantitative component utilized a cross-sectional survey design to measure various dimensions of cultural competence, while the qualitative component employed open-ended questions to capture rich, contextualized accounts of interns' experiences, challenges, and strategies in culturally diverse educational settings.

The mixed-methods design follows the concurrent embedded model (Casingal, 2022), where quantitative and qualitative data are collected simultaneously and analyzed to provide complementary insights into the research questions. This approach allows for triangulation of findings and provides a more robust understanding of the complex phenomena under investigation.

Research Locale and Participants

The study included 120 teaching interns from Pangasinan State University-San Carlos Campus who completed their practice teaching during the academic year. The participant demographics were as follows:

Age distribution:

- 20-25 years old: 110 participants (91.7%)
- 26-30 years old: 7 participants (5.8%)
- 31-35 years old: 2 participants (1.7%)
- 36 years and above: 1 participant (0.8%)
- Gender distribution:
 - Female: 104 participants (86.7%)
 - Male: 16 participants (13.3%)

Program enrollment:

- Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEE): 92 participants (76.7%)
- Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education (BTLEd): 28 participants (23.3%)

Research Instrument

The primary data collection instrument consists of a comprehensive structured questionnaire organized into multiple sections addressing different aspects of cultural competence development. The questionnaire includes demographic information collection, cultural competence self-assessment using 5-point Likert scales, challenge identification and rating, support system evaluation, and open-ended reflection questions allowing for detailed experience sharing.

The instrument incorporates various assessment methodologies, including cultural competence confidence ratings from 1 (Not confident at all) to 5 (Very confident), challenge level assessments on similar scales, frequency measurements for support system utilization, and multiple-choice selections for resource identification. The questionnaire was validated through expert review and pilot testing to ensure reliability and validity.

Data Collection Procedure

Data collection followed a systematic approach beginning with the securing of necessary institutional permissions and ethical clearances. The questionnaire was distributed electronically through Google Forms, allowing for efficient data collection while maintaining participant anonymity and confidentiality. Participants received clear instructions regarding the voluntary nature of participation and their right to withdraw at any time.

The data collection period extended over several weeks to accommodate intern schedules and ensure maximum participation rates. Follow-up communications were sent to encourage participation while respecting participant autonomy. All responses were automatically recorded and stored securely through the electronic platform.

Data Analysis

Data analysis employed both quantitative and qualitative methodologies appropriate to the mixed-methods design. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics for demographic variables, mean scores and standard deviations for Likert-scale responses, frequency distributions for categorical variables, and correlation analyses to examine relationships between variables.

Qualitative analysis involved thematic analysis of open-ended responses, systematic coding of reflective answers, pattern identification across participant experiences, and content analysis to identify recurring themes and insights. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings through triangulation and cross-validation ensured comprehensive understanding and robust research conclusions.

Ethical Considerations

The research adhered to strict ethical guidelines throughout all phases of the study. Informed consent was obtained from all participants through clear explanations of the research purpose, procedures, and participant rights. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained through secure data handling protocols and the removal of identifying information from analysis datasets.

Participation was entirely voluntary, with participants retaining the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Data storage and handling followed secure protocols, and the study received

appropriate institutional review and approval. These ethical considerations were fundamental to maintaining research integrity and protecting participant welfare throughout the investigation.

Results and Discussion

Demographic Profile of Participants

The study included 91 teaching interns from the PSU-San Carlos Campus Bachelor of Elementary Education program. The demographic analysis reveals important characteristics of the participant population that inform the interpretation of findings.

Table **1**
Demographic Characteristics of Teaching Interns

Attribute/	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	83	91.2%
Male	8	8.8%
Age Groups		
20-25 years old	83	91.2%
26-30 years old	5	5.5%
31-35 years old	2	2.2%
36 years and above	1	1.1%
Program		
Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEE)	91	100%

The overwhelming majority of participants are young adult females in their early twenties, reflecting typical enrollment patterns in elementary education programs. This demographic profile is consistent with national trends in teacher education and provides a representative sample for understanding the experiences of beginning teachers in multicultural settings.

Cultural Competence Development Analysis

Self-Assessed Cultural Competence Levels

Analysis of the five core cultural competence indicators reveals varying levels of confidence among teaching interns in different aspects of culturally responsive teaching.

Table **2**
Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Results

Cultural Competence Indicator	Mean	Standard	N
-------------------------------	------	----------	---

	Score	Deviation	
Understanding cultural differences impact on teaching and learning	4.42	0.68	91
Confidence in adapting teaching strategies	4.38	0.71	91
Importance of incorporating local perspectives	4.35	0.69	91
Awareness of own cultural biases	4.29	0.73	91
Effectiveness in cross-cultural communication	4.04	0.82	91

The results indicate that teaching interns demonstrate strong theoretical understanding of cultural competence principles, with all mean scores exceeding 4.0 on the 5-point scale. However, the lowest score in cross-cultural communication effectiveness (M=4.04, SD=0.82) suggests that practical application of cultural competence remains challenging, particularly in direct student interaction contexts.

These findings align with research by Jackson (2015) and Ji (2020), who emphasize the progressive nature of cultural competence development and the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. The relatively high standard deviation for communication effectiveness (0.82) indicates significant variation among interns in their perceived ability to communicate effectively across cultural boundaries.

Challenge Areas in Cultural Competence Implementation

Analysis of specific challenge areas reveals where interns struggle most in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices in real classroom settings.

Table 3
Challenge Level Assessment in Cultural Competence Implementation

Challenge Area	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	N
Understanding and addressing cultural differences in classroom	3.47	1.08	91
Creating culturally inclusive lesson plans	3.36	1.12	91
Managing classroom dynamics in multicultural settings	3.34	1.15	91
Adapting teaching materials to be culturally inclusive	3.34	1.11	91
Making classroom strategies for different cultural backgrounds	3.32	1.09	91
Building relationships with students from different backgrounds	3.18	1.14	91

Communicating with students who primarily use local language	3.13	1.22	91
--	------	------	----

Note: Scale 1 = Not challenging at all, 5 = Extremely challenging

The challenge assessment reveals significant difficulties in practical implementation of cultural competence, with all areas showing moderate to high challenge levels ($M = 3.13-3.47$). Most concerning is the communication challenge with students who primarily use local languages ($M=3.13$, $SD=1.22$), indicating substantial barriers in establishing effective teacher-student relationships across linguistic boundaries.

The high standard deviations across all challenge areas (1.08-1.22) suggest considerable variation in intern experiences, likely reflecting differences in school placements, student populations, and individual preparation levels. This variation supports the need for differentiated support approaches based on specific placement contexts and individual intern needs.

Support Systems and Resource Utilization

Most Helpful Resources for Cultural Competence Development

Analysis of resource utilization patterns reveals which support systems interns find most valuable in developing cultural competence.

Table

4

Resource Utilization and Perceived Helpfulness

Resource Type	Frequency	Percentage	Effectiveness Rating
Pre-internship orientation programs	79	86.8%	High
Peer support from fellow interns	52	57.1%	Moderate-High
Mentor teacher guidance	49	53.8%	High
University coordinator support	45	49.5%	Moderate
Online resources	39	42.9%	Moderate
PSU-provided training materials	37	40.7%	Moderate
Other resources	7	7.7%	Variable

Pre-internship orientation programs emerge as the most widely utilized and valued resource (86.8% utilization), highlighting the importance of foundational preparation before entering diverse classroom settings. This finding supports McKenzie & Mellis's (2017) research on the critical role of comprehensive orientation programs in preparing interns for cultural diversity challenges.

Notably, while mentor teacher guidance is highly valued when accessed, only 53.8% of interns report utilizing this resource effectively. This gap suggests potential barriers to mentor-intern

communication or variations in mentor preparedness for supporting cultural competence development, consistent with Heppner's (2017) findings on mentoring effectiveness.

Mentor Guidance Utilization Patterns

Table **5**
Frequency of Mentor Teacher Guidance Seeking

Frequency of Guidance Seeking	Number of Interns	Percentage
Weekly	38	41.8%
Rarely	26	28.6%
Monthly	17	18.7%
Never	10	11.0%

The mentor guidance utilization pattern reveals concerning gaps in support system engagement. Nearly 40% of interns (combining "Rarely" and "Never" categories) report minimal utilization of mentor teacher guidance for cultural diversity challenges. This finding suggests either inadequate mentor preparation, communication barriers, or insufficient time allocation for mentoring activities.

The 41.8% of interns who seek weekly guidance represent the most engaged group and likely experience better support for cultural competence development. This pattern aligns with research by Casingal (2022) emphasizing the importance of consistent, ongoing support throughout the internship experience.

Professional Development Priorities

Analysis of professional development preferences reveals interns' perceived needs for enhanced cultural competence support.

Table **6**
Professional Development Priority Areas

Professional Development Area	Frequency	Percentage
Classroom management in diverse settings	65	71.4%
Culturally responsive teaching strategies	61	67.0%
Parent/community engagement in Pangasinan	45	49.5%
Cross-cultural communication in local context	36	39.6%
Local language support techniques	25	27.5%
Cultural sensitivity training	16	17.6%

Professional Development Area	Frequency	Percentage
Curriculum adaptation for local context	8	8.8%

Classroom management in diverse settings emerges as the highest priority (71.4%), reflecting the practical challenges interns face in managing multicultural classroom dynamics. This priority aligns with the challenge assessment findings and emphasizes the need for concrete, actionable strategies for daily classroom management.

The high prioritization of culturally responsive teaching strategies (67.0%) indicates strong intern motivation to develop effective pedagogical approaches for diverse student populations. However, the relatively lower priority placed on local language support techniques (27.5%) may reflect either confidence in this area or lack of awareness regarding its importance.

Qualitative Analysis: Intern Experiences and Challenges

Specific Cultural Diversity Challenges

Qualitative analysis of open-ended responses reveals recurring themes in interns' experiences with cultural diversity challenges:

Language and Communication Barriers: Multiple interns reported difficulties communicating with students who primarily use local languages. One intern noted: "I encountered a challenge when some students from different cultural backgrounds were hesitant to participate in group activities due to language barriers and varying traditions. I addressed this by encouraging peer support, using visual aids, and creating activities that celebrated cultural differences."

Cultural Respect and Protocol Issues: Several interns identified challenges related to cultural protocols and respect patterns. One participant observed: "Students who don't use 'po' and 'opo' when talking to their elders. I addressed it by correcting them properly." This response highlights the intersection of cultural education and behavioral management in diverse classrooms.

Inclusion and Participation Challenges: Interns frequently mentioned difficulties ensuring equal participation across cultural groups. One intern described: "Language Barrier and Inclusion" as primary challenges, indicating the complex relationship between linguistic diversity and classroom inclusion.

Growth and Development Patterns

Analysis of interns' reflections on their cultural competence evolution reveals significant professional growth patterns:

Enhanced Awareness and Sensitivity: One intern reflected: "Since my internship began, I've learned that cultural competence is more than respect—it's about adapting teaching, valuing every student's background, and continually reflecting to create an inclusive classroom."

Practical Strategy Development: Interns described developing concrete approaches to cultural inclusion: "I've found that using student-centered activities, celebrating diverse cultures, and

building strong relationships through daily check-ins are the most effective ways to create an inclusive and welcoming classroom where every student feels valued."

Professional Identity Transformation: Many interns reported fundamental changes in their professional identity: "Teaching in a culturally diverse setting has shaped me into a more empathetic, flexible, and student-centered educator, committed to creating a classroom where every voice matters."

Impact Assessment of Internship Experience

Professional Growth Indicators

Analysis of interns' self-reported professional growth reveals positive impacts across multiple dimensions:

Table 7
Impact of Internship Experience on Professional Development

Impact Area	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	N
Improved cultural awareness	4.68	0.58	91
Enhanced teaching effectiveness	4.64	0.61	91
Developed professional confidence	4.62	0.64	91
Prepared for future teaching positions	4.59	0.67	91
Changed perspective on education in Pangasinan	4.47	0.74	91
Overall internship experience rating	4.71	0.52	91

Note: Scale 1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree

The impact assessment reveals overwhelmingly positive outcomes across all measured dimensions, with mean scores ranging from 4.47 to 4.71. The highest impact appears in cultural awareness improvement (M=4.68), suggesting that the internship experience successfully enhances interns' understanding of cultural diversity in educational contexts.

The consistently high scores and relatively low standard deviations indicate broad consensus among interns regarding the positive impact of their internship experience. However, the lowest score for "changed perspective on education in Pangasinan" (M=4.47, SD=0.74) suggests that while interns develop cultural competence, fundamental perspective transformation may require additional time and experience.

Confidence in Culturally Responsive Teaching Implementation

Table 8
Confidence Level in Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching Practices

Confidence Level	Frequency	Percentage
Very confident (5)	24	26.4%
Confident (4)	41	45.1%
Moderately confident (3)	23	25.3%
Somewhat confident (2)	3	3.3%
Not confident at all (1)	0	0.0%

Mean confidence level: 3.95 (SD = 0.82)

The confidence assessment reveals that while most interns (71.5%) report being confident or very confident in implementing culturally responsive teaching practices, a significant minority (25.3%) remains only moderately confident. This finding suggests that while the internship experience builds confidence, additional support and practice may be needed to ensure all interns achieve high confidence levels.

The absence of interns reporting no confidence indicates that the internship experience provides at least minimal preparation for culturally responsive teaching. However, the relatively high standard deviation (0.82) suggests considerable individual variation in confidence development, supporting the need for differentiated support approaches.

Discussion of Findings

Alignment with Theoretical Framework

The findings align closely with the progressive model of cultural competence development proposed by Jani et al. (2016), which describes movement through stages of cultural awareness, knowledge, sensitivity, and competence. Interns demonstrate strong cultural awareness (evidenced by high self-assessment scores) but face challenges in practical application (evidenced by moderate challenge scores), suggesting they are in the transition between awareness and practical competence.

The gap between theoretical understanding and practical application reflects Jackson's (2015) emphasis on the need for integrated learning experiences that combine structured preparation with guided reflection on real-world experiences. The PSU-San Carlos Campus program appears to provide strong theoretical foundation through orientation programs, but may need enhancement in supporting practical application.

Support System Effectiveness and Gaps

The research reveals both strengths and gaps in current support systems. Pre-internship orientation programs emerge as highly effective and widely utilized, supporting McKenzie & Mellis's (2017) findings on the importance of comprehensive preparation. However, the underutilization of mentor teacher guidance by nearly 40% of interns suggests systemic issues that require attention.

The preference for peer support (57.1% utilization) indicates the value of collaborative learning approaches in cultural competence development. This finding supports Casingal's (2022) observations about the importance of community-based learning in diverse educational contexts. The relatively lower utilization of online resources (42.9%) may reflect either preference for face-to-face interaction or limitations in available digital resources.

Professional Identity Development

The qualitative findings reveal significant professional identity development among interns, consistent with research by Nghia & Tai (2017) and Watt et al. (2016) on identity formation in multicultural teaching contexts. Interns report fundamental shifts in their understanding of education and their role as teachers, moving toward more inclusive and culturally responsive approaches.

The transformation from viewing cultural competence as simple respect to understanding it as active adaptation and continuous reflection represents sophisticated professional development. This evolution suggests that the internship experience, despite its challenges, facilitates meaningful professional growth that extends beyond technical skill development.

Implications for Practice

The findings have several important implications for teacher education programs:

Enhanced Mentor Preparation: The underutilization of mentor teacher guidance suggests need for enhanced mentor preparation programs focused specifically on supporting cultural competence development. Mentors require training in culturally responsive teaching practices and guidance techniques for supporting intern development.

Differentiated Support Approaches: The significant individual variation in challenge experiences and confidence levels indicates need for differentiated support approaches that account for varying placement contexts and individual preparation levels.

Sustained Support Systems: While pre-internship orientation is highly valued, the ongoing challenges suggest need for sustained support throughout the internship experience, including regular check-ins, problem-solving sessions, and peer collaboration opportunities.

Integration of Theory and Practice: The gap between theoretical understanding and practical application suggests need for more integrated approaches that connect theoretical learning with guided practice in real classroom settings.

Conclusions

This study provides comprehensive insights into the professional growth of teaching interns developing cultural competence in diverse educational settings at PSU-San Carlos Campus. The findings reveal a complex picture of strong theoretical preparation coupled with significant practical implementation challenges, highlighting both the effectiveness of current support systems and areas requiring enhancement.

Key Findings Summary

Teaching interns demonstrate strong cultural awareness and theoretical understanding of culturally responsive teaching principles, with mean self-assessment scores exceeding 4.0 across all cultural competence indicators. However, practical implementation remains challenging, particularly in cross-cultural communication and relationship building with diverse student populations.

Pre-internship orientation programs emerge as the most effective support mechanism, utilized by 86.8% of interns and rated as highly valuable. However, significant gaps exist in mentor teacher guidance utilization, with nearly 40% of interns reporting minimal engagement with mentors for cultural diversity challenges.

The internship experience produces overwhelmingly positive outcomes, with interns reporting substantial growth in cultural awareness (M=4.68), teaching effectiveness (M=4.64), and professional confidence (M=4.62). Professional identity development shows significant transformation toward more inclusive and culturally responsive approaches to education.

Theoretical Contributions

The research contributes to understanding of cultural competence development by documenting the specific challenges and growth patterns of teaching interns in multicultural contexts. The findings support progressive models of cultural competence development while highlighting the critical importance of sustained support during the transition from theoretical knowledge to practical application.

The study extends previous research by examining cultural competence development in the specific context of Philippine education, where linguistic diversity and cultural traditions create unique challenges and opportunities for teacher development. The findings provide evidence for the effectiveness of comprehensive orientation programs while identifying critical gaps in ongoing support systems.

Practical Implications

The findings have immediate implications for teacher education programs seeking to enhance cultural competence development:

Program Enhancement Recommendations:

- Strengthen mentor teacher preparation programs with specific focus on supporting cultural competence development
- Develop differentiated support approaches that account for varying placement contexts and individual needs
- Create systematic check-in procedures to ensure consistent mentor-intern engagement
- Expand peer collaboration opportunities to leverage the value of peer support

Support System Improvements:

- Enhance integration between pre-internship preparation and ongoing support throughout the experience
- Develop targeted professional development opportunities in high-priority areas such as classroom management in diverse settings
- Create resource libraries and practical tools for culturally responsive teaching implementation
- Establish feedback mechanisms to continuously improve support system effectiveness

Limitations and Future Research

This study is limited by its focus on a single institution and program, potentially limiting generalizability to other contexts. The self-report nature of the data may introduce response bias, and the cross-sectional design limits understanding of long-term development patterns.

Future research should employ longitudinal designs to track cultural competence development over extended periods, include multiple institutions and programs for broader generalizability, incorporate objective measures of cultural competence alongside self-report data, and examine the long-term impact of internship experiences on teaching effectiveness in diverse classrooms.

Additionally, research examining mentor teacher perspectives and preparation would provide valuable insights into support system effectiveness. Investigation of specific cultural contexts and their impact on intern development would enhance understanding of how geographic and demographic factors influence cultural competence development.

Final Recommendations

Based on the comprehensive analysis of teaching intern experiences at PSU-San Carlos Campus, this study recommends a multi-faceted approach to enhancing cultural competence development:

1. **Systematic Enhancement of Support Systems:** Develop integrated support frameworks that connect pre-internship preparation with sustained guidance throughout the experience, ensuring consistent mentor engagement and peer collaboration opportunities.
2. **Targeted Professional Development:** Prioritize professional development in classroom management for diverse settings and culturally responsive teaching strategies, addressing the highest-priority needs identified by interns.
3. **Continuous Program Evaluation:** Implement systematic evaluation procedures to monitor support system effectiveness and intern development, enabling continuous improvement of program components.
4. **Community Engagement:** Strengthen connections between teacher education programs and local communities to enhance understanding of cultural contexts and build sustainable relationships that support long-term teaching effectiveness.

The journey from challenge to competence in culturally diverse educational settings requires sustained commitment from institutions, mentors, and interns themselves. This research provides evidence-based guidance for enhancing that journey, ultimately improving educational outcomes for all students in multicultural classrooms.

Article Publication Details

This article is published in the **Globenix Multidisciplinary Journal**, ISSN XXXX-XXXX (Online). In Volume 1 (2025), Issue 1 (November - December) - 2025

The journal is published and managed by **Globenix Publisher**.

Copyright © 2025, Authors retain copyright. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> (CC BY 4.0 deed)

Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank the editors and the reviewers for their valuable suggestions on this paper.

Funding

The authors declare that no funding was received for this work.

References

1. Alismail, H. A. (2016). Multicultural education: Teachers' perceptions and preparation. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(11), 139-146.
2. Casingal, C. P. (2022). The difficulties encountered by Filipino elementary pupils in completing online performance tasks. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 4(1), 1-8.
3. Genishi, C., & Dyson, A. H. (2015). *Children, language, and literacy: Diverse learners in diverse times*. Teachers College Press.
4. Heppner, P. P. (2017). Creating mentoring opportunities to promote cultural competencies and social justice. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 45(1), 137-157.
5. Hora, M. T., & Millar, S. B. (2023). *A guide to building education partnerships: Navigating diverse cultural contexts to turn challenge into promise*. Taylor & Francis.
6. Jackson, J. (2015). Becoming interculturally competent: Theory to practice in international education. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 48, 91-107.
7. Jani, J. S., Osteen, P., & Shipe, S. (2016). Cultural competence and social work education: Moving toward assessment of practice behaviors. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 52(3), 311-324.

8. Ji, Y. (2020). Embedding and facilitating intercultural competence development in internationalization of the curriculum of higher education. *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, 9(3), 13-19.
9. McKenzie, S., & Mellis, C. (2017). Practically prepared? Pre-intern student views following an education package. *Advances in Medical Education and Practice*, 111-120.
10. Milner, H. R. (2021). *Start where you are, but don't stay there: Understanding diversity, opportunity gaps, and teaching in today's classrooms*. Harvard Education Press.
11. Nghia, T. L. H., & Tai, H. N. (2017). Preservice teachers' identity development during the teaching internship. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(8), 1-15.
12. Romijn, B. R., Slot, P. L., & Leseman, P. P. M. (2021). Increasing teachers' intercultural competences in teacher preparation programs and through professional development: A review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 98, 103236.
13. Warren, C. A. (2014). Towards a pedagogy for the application of empathy in culturally diverse classrooms. *The Urban Review*, 46, 395-419.
14. Watt, K., Abbott, P., & Reath, J. (2016). Developing cultural competence in general practitioners: An integrative review of the literature. *BMC Family Practice*, 17, 1-11.
15. Westwood, P. (2018). *Inclusive and adaptive teaching: Meeting the challenge of diversity in the classroom*. Routledge.

Publisher's Note

GLOBENIX PUBLISHER remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations. The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of GLOBENIX PUBLISHER and/or the editor(s). GLOBENIX PUBLISHER disclaims responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.