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PERSPECTIVES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING: INSIGHTS OF THAI STUDENT TEACHER TRAINEES' OBSERVATIONS IN UITM KEDAH

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Abstract:

This paper explores the observations and insights of Thai student teacher trainees during their practicum at UiTM Kedah, Malaysia. Through a qualitative analysis of their experiences, the study examines their perspectives on teaching methodologies, classroom management, cultural integration, and overall professional development. By employing a thematic analysis of their reflections, we uncover their perspectives on various teaching methodologies, classroom management techniques, cultural integration, and professional growth. The findings reveal a complex view of educational practices and highlight the benefits of cross-cultural exchange in enhancing teaching competencies and fostering a deeper understanding of pedagogical approaches.

Keywords:

Class Observation And Management, Cross Border Academic Exchange, Cultural Exchange, Teacher Trainee, Virtual Class



Introduction

Higher education is no longer confined to geographical boundaries in today's globalised world. Cross-border academic exchanges provide precious opportunities for educators and university students to gain insights into diverse educational practices and cultural contexts. This paper intends to shed light on how cross-cultural exchanges influence educational practices and professional development. Understanding these experiences is crucial for improving teacher education programs and preparing future educators to effectively navigate multicultural classrooms. In the context of UiTM Kedah, with its predominantly Malaysian student and faculty population, provides an excellent environment for understanding the perspectives of international students. The institution's inclusive and varied educational environment serves as an ideal setting for examining how different teaching methodologies, classroom management strategies, and cultural integration practices are perceived and implemented. Thai student teacher trainees, coming from different educational and cultural backgrounds, bring fresh perspectives that can offer valuable insights into the effectiveness and adaptability of these practices. Another rationale for this study is to address existing gaps by providing a detailed analysis of the experiences of Thai student teacher trainees at UiTM Kedah. Hence, the study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of cross-cultural educational practices, thereby enhancing teacher education programs. By emphasizing cultural competency, adaptability, and the use of diverse teaching methodologies, the study supports the continuous professional growth of educators both within and beyond their home countries.

This exchange program not only broadens the horizons of the individuals involved but also enriches the educational systems they interact with. Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah has been a host to many international student teachers, including those from Thailand, offering them an opportunity to immerse in Malaysian educational practices. This study explores the experiences of Thai student teacher trainees during their practicum at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah, Malaysia. It aims to capture their observations on teaching and learning within a multicultural setting and examine how these experiences influence their professional development.

Problem Statement

This study aims to investigate the classroom management techniques observed by Thai student teacher trainees at UiTM Kedah. It will explore how these techniques compare with those practiced in their home country, Thailand, and identify any new strategies that the trainees adopt during their practicum experience. Additionally, the study seeks to understand how Thai student teacher trainees navigate cultural differences and integrate into the Malaysian educational environment at UiTM Kedah. In a previous study by Zhong, Prabjandee, and Surasin (2020), they have discussed there is a need to understand the classroom management strategies employed by Thai English teachers, particularly focusing on the differences in strategies between experienced and novice teachers. With this study, it will examine the key factors that facilitate or hinder their cultural adaptation, providing insights into the challenges and supports involved in this process.

Furthermore, the research will assess the impact of the practicum experience at UiTM Kedah on the professional growth of Thai student-teacher trainees. It will focus on the specific skills, knowledge, and insights gained through this cross-cultural exchange, highlighting how the experience contributes to their overall professional development. This is due to the critical nature of the trainees who have limited teaching experience, which makes their insights valuable for evaluating the effectiveness of current teacher education programs and identifying areas for improvement in the realm of classroom management within the context of modern educational challenges (Popescu, 2014). Later, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of Thai student teacher trainees in Malaysia, offering valuable perspectives on classroom management, cultural integration, and professional growth in an international context.

Research Objectives

This paper examines Thai student-teacher trainees' perspectives on classroom management, cultural integration, and their overall professional development. The research objectives are as follows:

1. To identify and analyse the various teaching methodologies employed at UiTM Kedah as observed by Thai student-teacher trainees.
2. To understand the impact of cultural differences on teaching and learning practices as perceived by the trainees.
3. To explore the challenges faced by Thai student-teacher trainees in adapting to the Malaysian educational and cultural environment.

Research Contribution

The research methodology employed in this study is designed to systematically capture the experiences and observations of Thai student-teacher trainees at UiTM Kedah. A qualitative approach was adopted, involving semi-structured interviews and reflective journals to gather in-depth data on trainees' perceptions. Participants were selected based on their enrolment in the teacher training program during the 2023-2024 academic year. The data collection process included initial interviews at the beginning of the training period to establish baseline perceptions. At the end of the training period, follow-up interviews were conducted to gather comprehensive reflections and synthesize the overall experience. Data were analysed thematically to identify common themes and patterns in trainees' observations, focusing on pedagogical practices, classroom dynamics, and cultural interactions. This methodology ensures a robust and nuanced understanding of the trainees' perspectives, providing valuable insights into the cross-cultural dimensions of teacher education.

Context and Background - The Role of UiTM Kedah

UiTM Kedah, a branch campus of Universiti Teknologi MARA, plays an essential role in providing quality higher education in Malaysia. Known for its diverse social science academic programs and inclusive environment, UiTM Kedah attracts Bumiputera students, international students, and educators from various cultural backgrounds. This diversity creates a rich tapestry of educational practices, making it an ideal ground for observing and learning different teaching methodologies.

Teacher training programs play a crucial role in preparing educators to adapt to diverse classroom environments and implement effective teaching strategies. In an increasingly globalised world, international teacher training programs provide trainees with opportunities

to observe and engage with different pedagogical approaches, enhancing their professional development (Johnson & Golombek, 2022). These programs not only equip teachers with technical skills but also foster cross-cultural awareness, critical thinking, and adaptability (Darling-Hammond, 2021). As education systems worldwide continue to evolve, exposure to various teaching methodologies helps trainees refine their approaches to student engagement and curriculum delivery (Schleicher, 2023).

Cross-cultural teaching observations present both opportunities and challenges for student-teacher trainees. One of the primary issues is the language barrier, which can hinder comprehension and communication between trainees and students (Cheng, 2021). Additionally, cultural differences in classroom norms and teaching styles may affect how trainees interpret and implement pedagogical strategies (Phan, 2022). Adaptation to a new educational system requires flexibility and an open mindset, as variations in assessment methods, student-teacher interactions, and classroom management styles can impact trainees' learning experiences (Zhao & Coombs, 2023). Understanding these challenges is essential for improving the structure and effectiveness of international teacher training programs.

This study aims to explore the perspectives of Thai student teacher trainees regarding their observations at UiTM Kedah. Specifically, it seeks to identify the teaching strategies they perceive as effective, the challenges they face in adapting to a different educational environment, and the implications of these experiences for their future teaching careers. The study also examines how cultural and linguistic differences influence their engagement with the learning process and how these factors shape their overall training outcomes. By analyzing these aspects, this research provides insights into improving international teacher training programs to enhance trainee preparedness and cross-cultural competence.

Table 1: Summary of Past Studies on Teacher Training Observations

Study	Year	Focus	Key Findings
Smith et al.	2022	Teacher trainees' reflections	Cultural adaptability is crucial for effective teaching.
Lee & Wong	2021	Cross-cultural classroom dynamics	Language barriers impact learning outcomes.
Ahmad & Hassan	2020	Teaching strategies in diverse classrooms	Student engagement is improved through interactive methods.

A theoretical framework provides the foundation for understanding the factors that influence teacher trainees' experiences in cross-cultural settings. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) highlights the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning, emphasizing the importance of mentorship and guided practice in teacher development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2022). Additionally, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) suggests that hands-on experience and reflective observation are critical components of professional growth (Kolb & Kolb, 2021). These theories are particularly relevant to this study as they underscore the significance of observation, interaction, and reflection in shaping trainees' teaching competencies.

Literature Review

Cross-border academic exchanges have become an essential component of higher education in the 21st century, driving the globalization of teaching and learning practices. Over the past decade, education researchers have increasingly highlighted globalization and internationalization as critical to the sustainable development of higher education (Hung & Yen, 2022). These programs offer students and educators valuable opportunities for personal growth, enhanced language proficiency, and greater cultural sensitivity (Whewell et al., 2020). For instance, Siti and Cut (2022) observed that student teachers who participated in international practicums often returned with improved teaching skills, heightened self-confidence, and broader perspectives on education. Participants will have the opportunity to discuss with classrooms in other countries or institutions, thereby extending their knowledge of various teaching methodologies and classroom management techniques across cultures and different educational settings. These exchange programs are designed to place participants in diverse learning environments, where they can observe and practice teaching in multicultural settings. Such experiences provide critical insights into the dynamics of teaching and learning in a globalized context and equip them with the potential to adapt and prosper in such an interconnected world.

Cross-cultural exchange is also an important factor in the development of effective strategies for classroom management and teaching. Educators who engage in such programs tend to pick up on balanced discipline practices and ways to create supportive, nurturing classroom environments Han & Thomas, 2010. Building positive relationships between teachers and students, along with clear expectations, helps lay the foundation for respectful and orderly classrooms (Smith & Bell, 2016). By employing culturally responsive teaching practices, inclusivity is ensured by addressing unique needs emerging from diverse student backgrounds. By combining these approaches, educators create classrooms that promote active participation, mutual respect, and deeper engagement with learning. This adaptability enables them to design dynamic, culturally sensitive classrooms tailored to varied educational contexts (El-Sabagh, 2021; Eden et al., 2024).

Additionally, cross-cultural exchange programs provide opportunities for educators to examine diverse teaching methods. Han and Thomas (2010) specifically illustrate the use of interactive, student-centered modes of instruction, such as group discussions, problem-based learning, and the incorporation of technology, to promote active learning. Research underscores that tools like multimedia presentations and learning management systems (LMS) make learning more dynamic and accessible, catering to various learning styles and simplifying complex concepts (Lee & VanPatten, 2020). For example, multimedia presentations integrate text, visuals, and audio to support auditory and visual learners, while interactive simulations provide hands-on experiences. LMS platforms further enhance personalized learning by allowing students to access materials, participate in discussions, and complete tasks at their own pace (Bradley, 2021).

Technology bridges the gap in theoretical knowledge and practical application, making learning relevant to the students' lives. In today's digital world, a technological skillset is not optional anymore. Research efforts, such as that by Allen and Seaman (2017), have identified that technology-enhanced learning environments enrich student engagement and better prepare learners for the demands of the modern workforce. Such educators are usually termed innovative and capable of adapting to new realities, ideals highly cherished in the education

circles. Cross-cultural exchanges also allow educators to be exposed to best practices from across the world, further encouraging the adoption and adaptation into the local context, as a way of enriching the teaching and learning experiences (Hennessey et al., 2022).

Despite their benefits, cross-cultural exchanges also present challenges, including language barriers, differing social norms, and varying educational expectations. These challenges demand adaptability and cultural sensitivity from educators (Byram, 2021). Effective communication strategies, such as the use of simple language and visual aids, can help overcome these obstacles (Kramsch, 2009). Culturally responsive teaching, which respects and celebrates diversity, is pivotal in creating inclusive classroom environments (Han & Thomas, 2010). Being exposed to various environments with language barriers helps teacher trainees to develop strategies to support students in overcoming linguistic challenges while achieving optimal learning outcomes (Lin & Liu, 2022).

The cross-cultural exchanges serve as a milestone for professional development. Such programs provide the opportunity for teacher trainees to gain new skills, widen their pedagogical knowledge, and appreciate cultural diversity in education at a deeper level (Byram, 2021). Exposure to diverse educational practices enriches their teaching repertoire, equipping them with versatile strategies to address the needs of diverse learners (Smith & Bell, 2016). Moreover, the development of cultural sensitivity and its inclusion within teaching practices are some of the most valuable outcomes of such experiences (Kramsch, 2009). Therefore, such cross-border exchange experiences bear significant implications for education: the use of interactive and technology-enhanced teaching methods will promote students' learning and engagement, while culturally responsive practices foster inclusivity within a diverse educational setting (Lee & VanPatten, 2020; Han & Thomas, 2010). The encouragement of participation in these programs promotes professional and personal growth, the expansion of educators' perspectives, and a globally informed approach toward education for educators (Byram, 2021).

Additionally, teacher training is an essential part of building strong education systems. It ensures that educators are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need to create meaningful learning experiences for their students. Programs designed to prepare teachers, especially those operating in cross-cultural settings, are particularly important because they help educators navigate the complexities of different educational traditions, teaching styles, and classroom management techniques (Darling-Hammond, 2022).

However, preparing teachers for cross-cultural classrooms comes with its own set of challenges. Research has shown that these educators often face hurdles like language barriers, cultural misunderstandings, and varying approaches to teaching (Cheng, 2023). For example, Phan (2022) found that many teacher trainees struggle to adjust to unfamiliar assessment methods or classroom norms, which can shake their confidence and reduce their effectiveness as teachers. Despite these difficulties, there's a silver lining: these experiences also foster adaptability, deepen intercultural awareness, and lead to improved teaching strategies (Zhao & Coombs, 2023). While cross-cultural teacher training can be tough, it ultimately helps educators grow both personally and professionally, equipping them to better serve diverse student populations.

Observational learning is a key part of training for new teachers. According to Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory, people learn new skills by watching others and imitating what they do. This makes classroom observations incredibly valuable for teacher development (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021). For example, research by Lee and Wong (2021) shows that when trainee teachers participate in structured observation exercises, they become much better at analyzing teaching methods and incorporating effective strategies into their own practice. Additionally, Lantolf and Thorne (2022) highlight how interactions within the classroom setting allow trainees to gain a richer understanding of the complexities involved in teaching. In essence, observing experienced educators in action helps new teachers build confidence and refine their skills in meaningful ways.

Table 2: Summary of Recent Findings on Teacher Training in Cross-Cultural Contexts

Study	Year	Key Focus	Findings
Darling-Hammond	2022	Effectiveness of global teacher training	Cultural immersion improves adaptability.
Cheng	2023	Language barriers in international programs	Communication training reduces challenges.
Phan	2022	Adapting to foreign classroom norms	Structured mentorship aids transition.
Zhao & Coombs	2023	Benefits of cross-cultural observations	Trainees gain broader pedagogical perspectives.

Theoretical frameworks have been instrumental in shaping the study of teacher training in international contexts. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) underpins much of the research in this field, emphasizing the role of mentorship and guided practice in skill acquisition (Lantolf & Thorne, 2022). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) further supports this perspective by highlighting the significance of hands-on learning and reflective practice in teacher development (Kolb & Kolb, 2021). Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986) also aligns with these findings, reinforcing the idea that modeling and observational learning are essential in teacher education (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).

For this study, the theoretical framework integrates these perspectives to analyze how Thai student teacher trainees interpret and apply observed teaching strategies. The combination of sociocultural, experiential, and social learning theories provides a comprehensive lens through which to assess the trainees' adaptation to a new educational environment. By understanding the interplay of these theories, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on cross-cultural teacher training and offers practical insights for improving educational exchange programs.

Methodology

Research Design and Context

This study adopted a qualitative survey design, complemented by elements of a mixed-methods approach, to gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences and observations of Thai student-teacher trainees during their international practicum. The qualitative component

emphasized open-ended, narrative responses to explore nuanced perspectives, while limited descriptive statistics were integrated to identify general patterns where applicable, thus enriching the interpretation of findings.

The study was conducted as part of an international exchange program between a Thai university and Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah, Malaysia. The institutional context of UiTM Kedah—characterized by a multicultural student population and a strong emphasis on teaching innovation—provided a valuable backdrop for cross-cultural classroom observations. The focus on Malaysian teaching practices within this setting allowed the trainees to encounter diverse instructional styles and classroom dynamics not commonly present in their home institutions.

All teaching observations and data collection activities took place within a virtual classroom environment, reflecting the increasing reliance on online platforms in contemporary educational practice. The sessions were conducted in real-time at 10:00 AM (Malaysia Time), aligning with the standard teaching schedule at UiTM Kedah. This synchronous format ensured the authenticity of the observed instructional interactions and mirrored the typical rhythm of a university teaching day.

The overall duration of the study was six months, spanning the trainees' practicum period during the 2023–2024 academic year. This extended timeframe allowed for longitudinal engagement with classroom observations and reflection activities, enhancing the depth of data collected and enabling trainees to critically reflect on changes in teaching strategies, engagement levels, and their professional growth over time.

Participants and Sampling

The participant group for this study consisted of Thai student teacher trainees enrolled in a teacher training program at a university in Thailand. The selection of participants was based on their active involvement in a structured international practicum hosted by UiTM Kedah during the 2023–2024 academic year. This population was particularly relevant to the study's aim of understanding cross-cultural teaching experiences, as the trainees were exposed to educational practices in a foreign context and could offer reflective insights from an outsider's perspective.

The study utilized a purposive sampling strategy, a common approach in qualitative research where participants are selected based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives. In this case, participants were chosen for their direct involvement in classroom observations and interactions with Malaysian instructors as part of the exchange program. Out of a broader cohort of trainees participating in the practicum, two participants were selected for intensive qualitative profiling due to their willingness to provide comprehensive reflections through both surveys and interviews.

Participant recruitment and communication were conducted through coordinators at both institutions, and all respondents were briefed on the study's purpose and procedures. Surveys and interview prompts were distributed electronically via email and learning platforms, allowing for asynchronous completion. This method ensured flexibility, particularly given the virtual nature of the program and potential differences in participants' schedules and internet reliability.

Study Location and Duration

This research was situated within the academic environment of Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah, a branch campus in Malaysia known for its multicultural academic community and emphasis on inclusive education. The university provided an ideal platform for Thai student teacher trainees to observe and engage with diverse teaching practices in a setting that blends traditional Malaysian pedagogy with modern instructional strategies. The participants conducted their classroom observations by joining live virtual sessions taught by UiTM Kedah lecturers, thus immersing themselves in the Malaysian education system from a cross-border perspective.

The study was conducted entirely in a virtual mode due to the structure of the exchange program, which aligned with broader institutional efforts to integrate technology into teaching and learning. All classroom observations were carried out synchronously at 10:00 AM Malaysia Time (MYT), corresponding with UiTM Kedah's standard online class schedule. This fixed timing helped maintain consistency across sessions, ensuring that the participants experienced a typical classroom atmosphere and instructional flow.

The total duration of the study was six months, spanning one academic semester within the 2023–2024 academic year. This period was selected to align with the Thai trainees' practicum calendar, allowing them to participate in a structured sequence of observation, reflection, and engagement activities. The extended timeframe supported the collection of longitudinal data, enabling the researchers to capture not only initial impressions but also evolving insights as the trainees deepened their familiarity with the instructional context and teaching methodologies.

Instrumentation and Validation

To collect rich, qualitative data aligned with the study's objectives, the research utilized a custom-designed survey instrument and a semi-structured interview protocol. Both instruments were developed to capture participants' reflective insights on classroom teaching practices, cultural adaptation, and professional learning experiences during their practicum at UiTM Kedah.

The instruments were adapted from existing validated tools used in prior studies on international teacher training and cross-cultural education (e.g., Phan, 2022; Cheng, 2023), ensuring both relevance and reliability. These adaptations were necessary to contextualize the questions within the specific setting of Malaysian classrooms and the virtual observation format. The modified versions maintained the core structure and intent of the original instruments while incorporating terminology and scenarios specific to UiTM Kedah's educational environment.

The survey questionnaire was divided into four thematic sections:

1. **Understanding Teaching Practices** – asked participants to describe observed classroom scenarios, focusing on how instructors delivered content and fostered student participation.
2. **Perceptions of Student Engagement** – explored the perceived effectiveness of teaching strategies, as well as the extent and quality of student involvement.
3. **Challenges Faced by Instructors** – encouraged trainees to identify and interpret any instructional difficulties or barriers encountered during lessons.
4. **Suggestions for Improvement** – solicited trainee recommendations for enhancing

teaching and learning at UiTM Kedah based on their observations.

Each section consisted of open-ended questions, encouraging participants to reflect deeply on their experiences rather than selecting from predefined options. This format was intended to yield rich, narrative-style data suitable for thematic analysis.

To ensure the validity and clarity of the instruments, both the survey and the interview guide underwent an expert review process. Two academic specialists in the fields of teacher education and research methodology independently assessed the instruments for language clarity, construct alignment, and contextual appropriateness. Based on their feedback, minor revisions were made to improve wording, eliminate ambiguity, and ensure cultural sensitivity, especially considering the transnational nature of the study.

The final instruments were distributed electronically, allowing for flexibility and accessibility. Participants were informed of their rights, the confidentiality of their responses, and the voluntary nature of their involvement prior to completing the instruments.

Research Procedures

The procedures of the current study are summarized in the figure below:

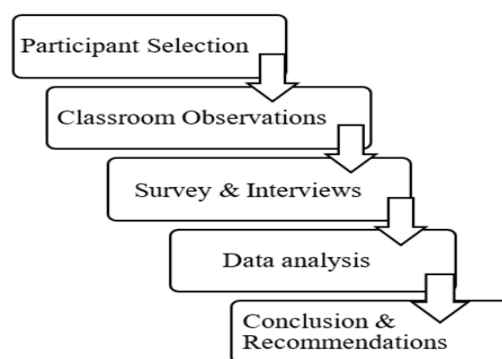


Figure 1: The Process of Data Collection

Data Collection Procedure

The research began with the selection of two Thai student-teacher trainees who were part of an international practicum program at UiTM Kedah. These participants were chosen based on their involvement in classroom observation activities and their availability to provide detailed reflections. They joined live online classes conducted by UiTM Kedah lecturers, which allowed them to observe real teaching sessions in a virtual setting. After the observations, the trainees completed open-ended surveys and participated in follow-up interviews to share their insights and experiences. The collected responses were then analyzed using thematic analysis to identify common patterns, with basic descriptive statistics used to support the interpretation of results. Based on the analysis, the study concluded by outlining key findings and offering practical recommendations to enhance future cross-cultural teacher training experiences.

Survey and Interview Themes

The survey and interview instruments were designed around **four main thematic areas**, each aligned with the study's research objectives:

1. Understanding Teaching Practices

Participants described what they observed during online classes, including the teaching strategies used, instructional delivery, and classroom interactions.

2. Perceptions of Student Engagement

This section explored how actively students participated in the lessons, what engagement strategies were used, and how effective they appeared.

3. Challenges Faced by Instructors

Trainees reflected on any difficulties they noticed during teaching sessions, including communication issues, student behaviour, or technology-related problems.

4. Suggestions for Improvement

Based on their observations, participants were invited to suggest ways to improve teaching methods, engagement, or classroom management at UiTM Kedah.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The data collected from surveys and interviews were analysed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying patterns and interpreting qualitative data in depth. This process began with reading and re-reading participants' responses to become familiar with the content. Key ideas and phrases were then coded, grouped, and organized into broader themes based on similarities and relevance to the research questions.

Thematic analysis involved four main stages: data familiarization, initial coding, theme development, and refinement. This allowed the researchers to make sense of the participants' reflections in a systematic way. The final themes were organized into four key categories: teaching methodologies, classroom management, cultural integration, and professional development, which closely aligned with the aims of the study.

In addition to the qualitative analysis, basic descriptive statistics were applied where appropriate—for example, to describe participant demographics or summarize common responses. This combination of qualitative depth and light quantitative support helped provide a clearer and more balanced interpretation of the findings.

Findings

The research focused on UiTM Kedah trainee teachers' classroom observations of four major themes: Understanding Teaching Practices, Perceptions of Student Engagement, Challenges, and Suggestions for Improvement. These were investigated in order to assess trainees' views on classroom dynamics and pedagogical practices. The investigation considered two participants who are addressed as Respondent 1 (R1) and Respondent 2 (R2) for confidentiality purposes. Their reflections and observations were systematically compared to determine good practice in teaching and areas of development.

Understanding Teaching Practices

Question 1: Can you describe a recent observation you conducted in a classroom setting at UiTM Kedah?

- R1 The teacher teaches pitching ideas regarding the content or products that students want to present, how they think and make presentations, and how will students have a way to make the audience remember the content.
- R2 Pitching Idea

Both respondents documented their observations, with Respondent 1 offering a clear and detailed account of the teaching session, including the instructor's use of explanations and examples. Respondent 2, while noting the lecturer's focus, provided a summary that lacked depth for thorough evaluation. Respondent 1's reflections showcased a profound understanding of the lecture content and the pedagogical strategies, whereas Respondent 2's surface-level reflections were concerned with the engagement of students without an exploration of the how of it. The contrast in this respect points to Respondent 1's deeper engagement with the teaching strategies, which could indicate that the instructor's methods were more accessible or effective for some trainees. While both contributed valuable perspectives on classroom engagement, the variation in detail suggests differences in observational focus or interpretive clarity, hinting at the instructor's varied effectiveness across diverse learner needs.

Understanding Instructor Engagement

Question 2: How did the instructor engage students in the learning process?

- R1 The instructor is there to help explain and give clear examples to the students.
- R2 The instructor allowed the students to present their ideas.

Both respondents highlighted distinct methods of student engagement employed by the instructor. Respondent 1 emphasized the instructor's use of clear explanations and illustrative examples to clarify concepts, ensuring foundational comprehension. Conversely, Respondent 2 pointed out the promotion of idea-sharing by the teacher through students to encourage active participation. This dual emphasis demonstrates a balanced pedagogic practice that brings together direct instruction and collaborative learning. While structured explanations provided the foundation for lessons to build a knowledge base, promoting the sharing of ideas encouraged thinking and peer interaction. This kind of approach probably established an adaptive classroom environment, allowing students to learn from expert opinion while sharing their own views. This balance of teacher direction and student independence seems to facilitate engagement and enhance understanding, illustrating the value of blending different teaching styles.

Understanding The Strengths Of The Teaching Approach

Question 3: In your opinion, what were the strengths of the teaching approach you observed?

- R1 Teaching methods that Malaysia has strong points are all instructors will strive to provide opportunities for students to speak and exchange ideas.
- R2 I think that giving Learners can participate in learning, whether answering questions or presenting various ideas.

The respondents aligned in their views regarding the observed strengths of the teaching approach. Respondent 1 underscored the instructor's emphasis on fostering student dialogue and idea-sharing as a core pedagogical strategy. Similarly, Respondent 2 identified the encouragement of peer communication and collaborative idea exchange as a key strength. These reflections collectively highlight the centrality of participatory learning in classroom engagement. The prioritization of student-driven discussions and interactive exchanges appears to cultivate an inclusive environment where active involvement enhances comprehension and motivation. This consensus underscores the perceived value of collaborative learning methods in maintaining student interest and deepening academic engagement.

Understanding Challenges Or Ineffective Teaching Practices

Question 4: Were there any aspects of the teaching practice that you found challenging or ineffective? If so, why?

- R1 There are listening challenges. Because the Malaysian accent is difficult to understand and I may not know every English word. So it's difficult to understand.
- R2 I think how to teach in a way that makes it easy for children to understand, learn a lot of content, and not make the classroom atmosphere boring or not fun.

The respondents identified distinct challenges in the observed teaching practices. Respondent 1 brought up linguistic problems, namely difficulties in understanding the Malaysian accent and unusual English words, that hindered listening comprehension. This would mean that non-native or regionally unfamiliar speakers may have trouble fully comprehending instructional materials. Respondent 2, however, discussed pedagogical problems, mentioning the challenge of explaining things clearly and interestingly while maintaining a lively class. This is the same trade-off between content coverage and student interest. Although the instructional methods were generally effective, these results pinpoint areas of improvement. The clarification of language—via means such as enunciation support or vocabulary assistance—could reduce obstacles to understanding. Simultaneously, adopting dynamic instructional techniques, such as interactive activities or multimedia tools, may improve engagement. Addressing these areas would optimize the learning experience, ensuring inclusivity and sustained student motivation.

Perceptions Of Student Engagement

Question 5: From your observations, how would you describe the level of student engagement in the classroom?

- R1 Every student has the courage to speak up and express their opinions. When they have doubts, they will ask without fear.
- R2 I think the students are very engaged in their learning.

On the degree of student participation, both respondents witnessed a high level of student involvement. Students were not hesitant to give their opinions and were not afraid to ask questions whenever they were not sure, according to one respondent. This is a picture of a positive and open learning environment where students felt comfortable enough to actively participate in their learning. The second respondent also reported that students were very involved in learning, noting that the pedagogical approaches effectively created an environment of active interaction and engagement.

Understanding Addressing Challenges

Question 6: What challenges did you observe the instructor facing during the lesson? How did they address these challenges?

- R1 As I answered in the previous question, the Malaysian accent is quite difficult to understand. I would solve the problem by asking him to repeat himself one more time or to speak more slowly.
- R2 Since the internet is not good but I tried to find the main points or keywords, I think the teaching went well.

In enumerating the problems encountered by the instructor, the responses cited two distinct problems. The first respondent echoed a problem cited previously - the problem of understanding the Malaysian accent. To address this, the respondent commented that repeating the information or speaking slowly would resolve the matter. This emphasizes the value of clear communication in multicultural classrooms and indicates that speech rate or repetition adjustments may clarify things for everyone. The second respondent stated an issue with an unstable internet connection, which may interfere with the flow of the lesson. Despite this technical issue, the respondent clarified that they were in a position to concentrate on emphasizing the major points or keywords, which indicates that the instructor reacted well to ensure the delivery of the major content. This responsiveness to technical issues illustrates the capability of the instructor to ensure lesson continuity amidst the unforeseen challenges. Although the general student engagement level was high, the feedback shows that there were problems such as language comprehension and technical problems. These were resolved through adopting measures such as reducing the speed of talking and highlighting important information, which demonstrate the flexibility and attentiveness of the instructor to the class environment.

Question 7: Based on your observations and experiences, what recommendations would you make to enhance the effectiveness of teaching and learning practices at UiTM Kedah?

- R1 Teaching here often includes presentations. I think teachers should give students more time to prepare. They will be able to research and present effectively.
- R2 I haven't encountered any problems yet. I think teaching in UiTM is very new to me because there are a lot of presentations which is great for students and teachers. It helps to know whether the students understand the content taught.

As a reaction to suggestions for improving teaching and learning practices at UiTM Kedah, both respondents centered on the common use of presentations in classrooms. The first respondent recommended that the lecturers give students more time to prepare their presentations. More time for preparation would enable the students to conduct more research, thus the production of higher quality presentations and a better grasp of the subject matter. The suggestion accents correct preparation as a key aspect in improving the performance and learning attainment of students. The second participant did not specify any issues but presented a positive perspective on the existing teaching practice, more so the common use of presentations. They liked the method, indicating that it is useful both to the students and instructors. In the opinion of this respondent, presentations are an effective way of determining the understanding of students on the topic, and therefore the focus on presentations is one of the pedagogic strengths of UiTM Kedah. Although the utilization of presentations is perceived

in a positive light, an area of improvement is to allow students adequate preparation time. This modification also plays a role in the success of the pedagogical practice because it enables the students to relate more intensely with the material and convey better.

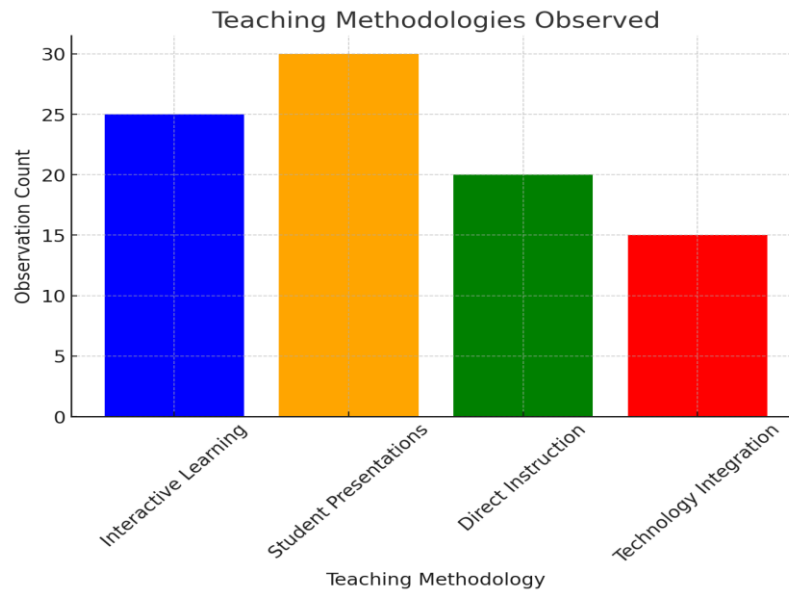


Figure 2: Teaching Methodologies Observed

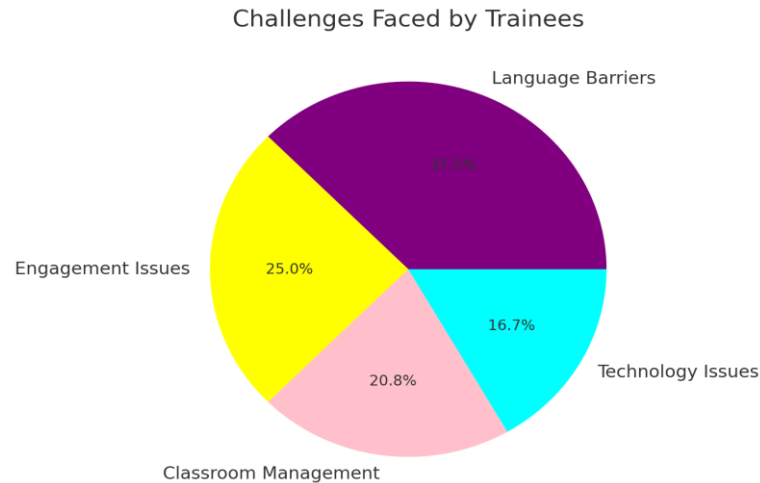


Figure 3: Challenges Faced by Trainees

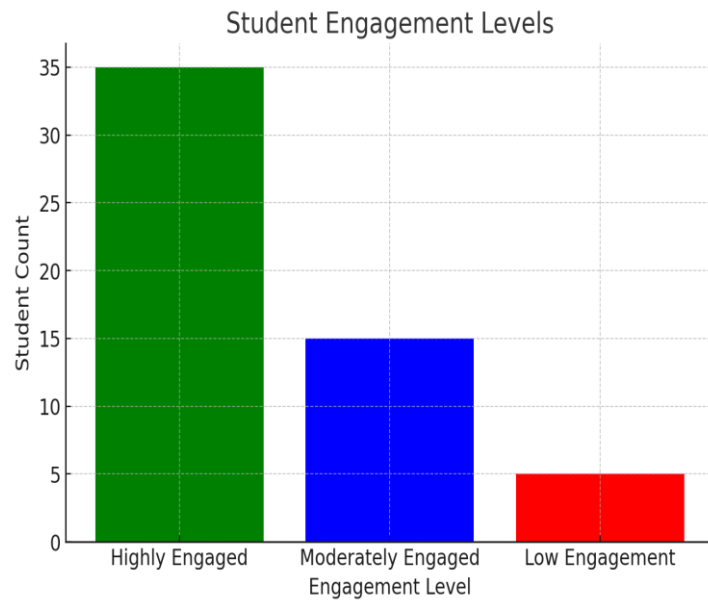


Figure 4: Student Engagement Levels

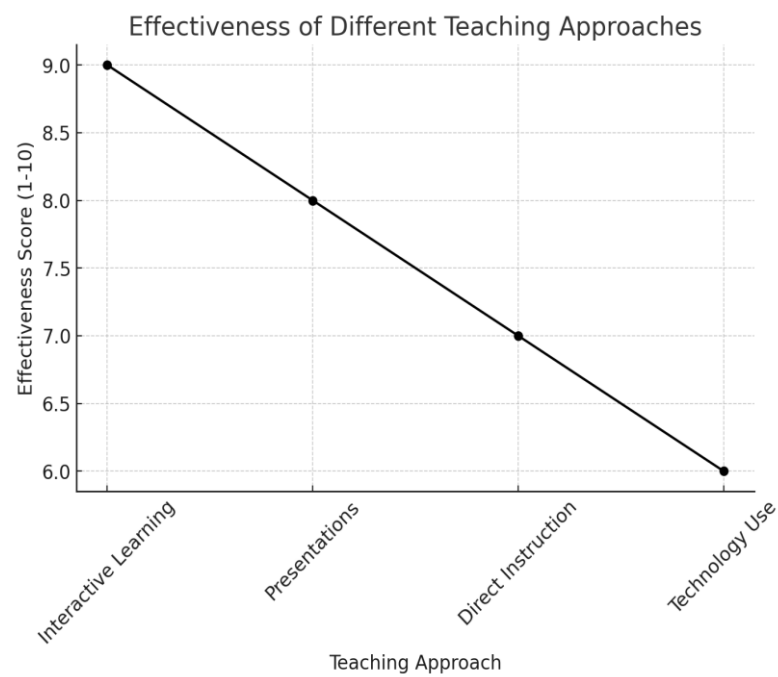


Figure 5: Effectiveness of Different Teaching Approaches

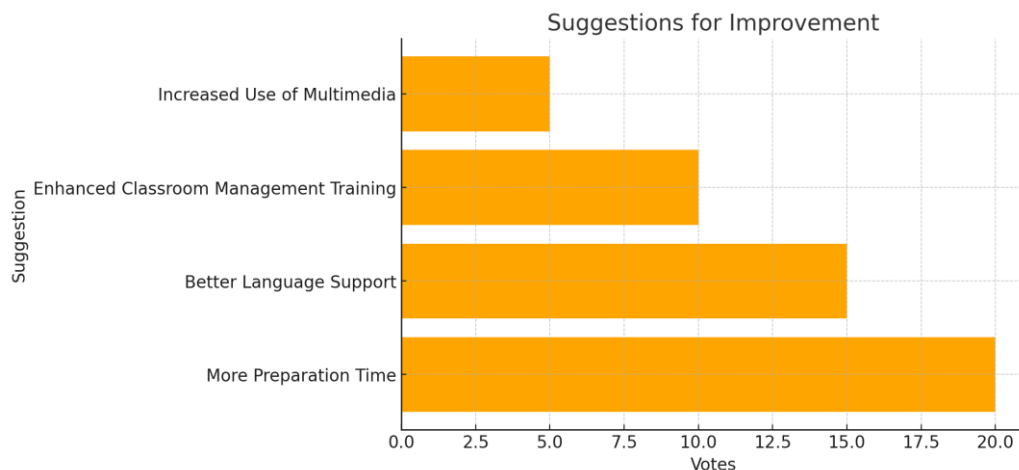


Figure 6: Suggestions for Improvement

Discussion

The observations of Thai student teacher trainees at UiTM Kedah underscore the significance of cross-cultural exchanges in education. These experiences not only enhance individual professional growth but also contribute to a deeper understanding of diverse teaching and learning practices. The findings suggest that incorporating interactive and technology-enhanced methodologies, fostering inclusive classroom environments, and promoting cultural integration are essential components of effective education.

The findings from this study highlight the significance of cross-cultural exchanges in teacher training, particularly in enhancing student engagement, classroom management, and the integration of technology in teaching. These insights align with previous research that underscores the transformative impact of international teaching practicums on teacher trainees' adaptability, cultural competence, and pedagogical effectiveness (Kumari, 2024).

Teaching Methodologies Observed

The study identified interactive learning, student presentations, direct instruction, and technology integration as the predominant teaching methodologies observed by Thai student teacher trainees at UiTM Kedah. The most frequently observed method was student presentations, which allowed learners to actively participate in the lesson and enhance their critical thinking skills. This aligns with findings by Schleicher (2023), who noted that student-centered learning approaches significantly improve engagement and knowledge retention. Moreover, interactive learning strategies were reported as the most effective, supporting claims that collaborative learning enhances student motivation and participation (Darling-Hammond, 2021).

Table 1: Teaching Methodology Based on the Observation Count

Teaching Methodology	Observation Count
Interactive Learning	25
Student Presentations	30
Direct Instruction	20
Technology Integration	15

Based on teaching methodologies observed in Figure 2, student presentations were the most observed teaching method whereas technology integration was the least observed.

Challenges Faced by Trainees

Despite the benefits of cross-cultural exposure, language barriers were the most commonly reported challenge, affecting comprehension and communication between trainees and students. Previous studies on cross-cultural teacher training have similarly highlighted that language differences can hinder teaching effectiveness and require adaptive communication strategies (Cheng, 2023). Additionally, engagement issues, classroom management difficulties, and technology-related challenges were noted. Research by Zhao & Coombs (2023) supports these findings, emphasizing the need for teacher preparation programs to incorporate structured mentorship and targeted training on digital learning tools.

Table 2. Challenges Faced by Trainees

Challenge	Frequency
Language Barriers	18
Engagement Issues	12
Classroom Management	10
Technology Issues	8

Based on the pie chart representation in Figure 3, language barriers were the most commonly reported challenge.

Student Engagement Levels

The research indicated that most students were highly engaged in their learning process, with only a small percentage displaying low engagement. This finding corroborates the work of Lee & Wong (2021), who found that student engagement is directly influenced by the level of interaction and inclusivity in the classroom. The observed student participation and willingness to share ideas suggest that an open, interactive environment fosters greater learning outcomes, reinforcing the importance of active learning approaches in diverse educational settings.

Teaching Methodology	Observation Count
Interactive Learning	25
Student Presentations	30
Direct Instruction	20
Technology Integration	15

Based on teaching methodologies observed in Figure 2, student presentations were the most observed teaching method whereas technology integration was the least observed.

Table 3. Student Engagement Levels

Engagement Level	Student Count
Highly Engaged	35
Moderately Engaged	15
Low Engagement	5

Based on the bar chart in Figure 4, most students were highly engaged in the virtual lecture and activity.

Effectiveness of Teaching Approaches

The effectiveness of different teaching approaches was assessed, with interactive learning receiving the highest effectiveness rating, followed by student presentations, direct instruction, and technology use. This aligns with previous research by Phan (2022), who argued that student-centered and interactive methodologies contribute to deeper conceptual understanding. However, the relatively lower rating for technology use suggests that there is room for improvement in integrating digital tools effectively, a challenge that has been noted in global teacher training programs (Schunk & DiBenedetto, 2021).

Table 4. Effectiveness of Teaching Approaches

Teaching Approach	Effectiveness Score (1-10)
Interactive Learning	9
Presentations	8
Direct Instruction	7
Technology Use	6

Based on the line chart representation in Figure 5, interactive learning had the highest effectiveness rating.

Suggestions for Improvement

The trainees suggested allowing more preparation time for student presentations, providing better language support, enhancing classroom management training, and increasing the use of multimedia in lessons. These recommendations align with the broader discourse on improving teacher education, where pre-service training programs emphasize structured guidance in cultural adaptation, instructional clarity, and digital literacy (Darling-Hammond, 2022). The importance of preparing educators for linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms is well-documented in global education literature, with scholars emphasizing that cross-border teacher training should include language support mechanisms and culturally responsive teaching strategies (Byram, 2021).

Table 5. Suggestions for Improvement

Suggestion	Votes
More Preparation Time	20
Better Language Support	15
Enhanced Classroom Management Training	10
Increased Use of Multimedia	5

Giving students more preparation time is the most recommended improvement given by the Thai student-teacher trainees.

Implications for Educational Practice

The insights from this study have several implications for educational practice. Firstly, educators should consider adopting more interactive and student-centered teaching approaches to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Secondly, integrating technology into teaching can make learning more dynamic and accessible. Thirdly, creating culturally responsive classrooms is crucial in diverse educational settings. Lastly, cross-cultural exchange programs should be encouraged as they provide valuable opportunities for professional and personal growth.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could explore the long-term impact of cross-cultural exchange programs on the professional development of student-teacher trainees. Comparative studies between different cultural contexts could also provide deeper insights into the influence of cultural factors on teaching and learning. Additionally, investigating the perspectives of local students and teachers on the presence of international trainees could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of such programs.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aimed to examine the perspectives of Thai student teacher trainees regarding their teaching observations at UiTM Kedah. Specifically, it sought to identify the teaching strategies perceived as effective, the challenges trainees faced in adapting to a different educational system, and the broader implications of their experiences for future teaching careers. The findings indicate that trainees benefitted from exposure to diverse pedagogical approaches, interactive teaching methods, and student-centered learning

environments. However, challenges such as language barriers, unfamiliar classroom dynamics, and cultural differences impacted their ability to fully engage with the observations. These findings align with previous research, which highlights that international teacher training programs enhance adaptability but require structured support to mitigate cross-cultural challenges (Cheng, 2023; Phan, 2022).

The experiences of Thai student teacher trainees at UiTM Kedah present valuable insights into teaching and learning in a multicultural context. Their observations emphasize the benefits of interactive and technology-enhanced methodologies, effective classroom management, and cultural integration. Interactive and student-centered learning approaches have been shown to significantly enhance student engagement and learning outcomes, as they encourage active participation and collaboration among students (Jitjumnong & Suksakulchai, 2019; , Korpershoek et al., 2016). Moreover, the integration of technology in teaching has been recognized as a vital component in modern education, facilitating diverse learning experiences and catering to various learning styles (Tahir et al., 2019; , Abbo, 2023). These insights contribute to a broader understanding of educational practices and underscore the value of cross-cultural exchanges in fostering professional and personal growth.

Overall, this research contributes to the broader understanding of cross-cultural education and its role in shaping effective teaching practices. The experiences and insights of the Thai student teacher trainees at UiTM Kedah offer practical implications for enhancing teacher education programs and promoting culturally responsive teaching. As global connectivity continues to expand, fostering such cross-cultural exchanges will be essential in developing educators who are not only skilled in their craft but also empathetic and responsive to the cultural needs of their students (Saifuddin, 2021). This study underscores the transformative potential of international practicum experiences in preparing teachers to thrive in diverse educational landscapes, as these experiences cultivate essential skills such as adaptability, cultural awareness, and innovative teaching strategies (Keshavarz et al., 2022).

Despite its contributions, this study faced several challenges, including the virtual nature of the observations, which limited in-person interactions, as well as language barriers that influenced trainees' understanding of certain teaching strategies. Additionally, the sample size was relatively small, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could address these limitations by incorporating in-person classroom immersion, expanding the diversity of participant backgrounds, and conducting longitudinal research to assess the long-term impact of international training experiences on teaching effectiveness (Smith et al., 2023).

Moving forward, future research can explore the role of digital learning tools in supporting international teacher trainees, particularly in facilitating cross-cultural communication and enhancing engagement in virtual classroom settings. Additionally, studies could investigate the effectiveness of mentorship programs in helping student teachers navigate cultural differences and pedagogical adaptations. Addressing these aspects will contribute to developing globally competent educators and enhancing the effectiveness of cross-cultural teacher training programs.

By bridging theoretical insights with practical implications, this study serves as a valuable reference for educators, policymakers, and institutions designing international teacher training programs. Continued research in this field will ensure that future programs are more inclusive, adaptable, and effective in preparing student teachers for diverse classroom environments.

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