

CULTURAL COMPETENCE, IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES, AND PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PERCEPTIONS AMONG TEACHING INTERNS IN DIVERSE CLASSROOMS

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ABSTRACT

Teaching internships place preservice teachers in settings where linguistic and cultural diversity must be addressed in daily instruction, yet evidence remains limited on how interns simultaneously perceive their cultural competence, implementation challenges, support resources, and professional growth in a Philippine provincial context. This study aimed to describe these interrelated perceptions among 91 Bachelor of Elementary Education teaching interns at Pangasinan State University-San Carlos Campus. A cross-sectional concurrent embedded mixed-methods survey was used. Quantitative responses to 5-point self-report items were summarized using frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, while open-ended responses supplied descriptive qualitative context. Self-ratings were highest for understanding how cultural differences affect teaching and learning ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.68$) and lowest for perceived effectiveness in cross-cultural communication ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.82$). Challenge ratings ranged from $M = 3.13$ to $M = 3.47$, with the highest mean for understanding and addressing cultural differences in the classroom. Pre-internship orientation was selected as helpful by 86.8% of respondents, whereas 39.6% rarely or never sought mentor guidance. Perceived internship-outcome ratings ranged from $M = 4.47$ to $M = 4.71$. Open-ended responses illustrated language barriers, inclusive strategies, cultural-protocol concerns, and perceived identity development. Favorable self-perceptions therefore coexisted with continuing implementation difficulty. The findings support targeted mentoring and practice-focused preparation but remain descriptive and context-bound because participant-flow, instrument-validation, and qualitative-coding documentation were incomplete.

Keywords: cultural competence, culturally responsive pedagogy, preservice teachers, professional growth perceptions, teacher education internship

INTRODUCTION

Teaching internships are a critical point at which preservice teachers translate coursework into decisions about communication, classroom participation, lesson design, and relationships with learners. In Pangasinan, this translation occurs in classrooms shaped by multiple local languages, cultural practices, and socioeconomic conditions. In this study, cultural competence refers to interns' self-perceived awareness of cultural differences, recognition of personal bias, confidence in adapting instruction, and perceived ability to communicate across cultural boundaries. Culturally responsive pedagogy refers more specifically to the application of that awareness in instructional planning and classroom interaction. Professional growth perceptions refer to retrospective judgments about how the internship influenced confidence, teaching effectiveness, and professional identity; they are not treated as objective measures of improvement.

Culturally responsive teacher preparation requires more than adding isolated multicultural content to a curriculum. Foundational accounts define culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy as instruction that promotes academic learning while drawing on learners' cultural knowledge, identities, and communities (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Gay, 2002). Teacher education should therefore develop sociocultural consciousness, affirming views of learners, knowledge of students and communities, and the capacity to design instruction that builds on cultural and

linguistic resources (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Research reviews also warn that superficial or fragmented diversity preparation is insufficient and that effective programs must connect beliefs, knowledge, field experience, and pedagogical action (Sleeter, 2001; Aronson & Laughter, 2016). Paris (2012) extends this orientation by arguing that pedagogy should sustain, rather than merely acknowledge, the linguistic and cultural pluralism of communities.

The distinction between perceived readiness and demonstrated practice is particularly important in preservice teacher education. Siwatu (2007) showed that culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectations can be measured as beliefs, but such beliefs are not equivalent to observed instructional competence. Intercultural competence research similarly recommends combining self-assessment with observation, performance evidence, and judgments by others rather than relying on a single measure (Deardorff, 2006; Hammer et al., 2003). Reviews of preservice-teacher training indicate that experiential learning and critical reflection can improve cultural-diversity beliefs, although evaluation designs often remain methodologically limited (Civitillo et al., 2018). Observational case research further suggests that culturally responsive practice is related to the interaction between diversity beliefs and the quality of reflection on teaching (Civitillo et al., 2019).

Linguistic diversity intensifies the demands of culturally responsive practice. Language differences can influence participation, teacher-student relationships, interpretation of behavior, and access to instruction (Genishi & Dyson, 2015). Lucas et al. (2008) identify linguistically responsive knowledge and practices that mainstream teachers need when teaching learners who use languages other than the language of instruction. Inclusive lesson planning similarly requires preservice teachers to balance curricular expectations, learners' backgrounds, and adaptive pedagogy (Westwood, 2018). These demands make local-language communication, relationship building, classroom management, and material adaptation relevant indicators of the theory-practice gap.

Mentoring and institutional support can mediate the theory-practice gap, but their effects depend on how support is organized and used. International reviews emphasize mentor preparation, availability, relational trust, actionable feedback, and the capacity to connect field experience with professional standards (Hobson et al., 2009; Ellis et al., 2020). Mentoring can become professional learning for both mentor and mentee when it supports reciprocal inquiry and reflection (Hudson, 2013). It can also shape preservice teachers' confidence and professional identity, with constructive relationships supporting growth and poorly aligned relationships constraining it (Izadinia, 2015). Heppner (2017) links mentoring to cultural competence and social justice development, while McKenzie and Mellis (2017) demonstrate the value of structured preparation before field experience.

Professional identity is another important dimension of internship experience. Teacher identity is generally understood as relational, context-dependent, multiple, and continuously negotiated through practice, feedback, emotion, biography, and reflection (Beijaard et al., 2004; Izadinia, 2013). Internship research shows that preservice teachers may revise how they understand themselves and their professional responsibilities as they interact with mentors, schools, and learners (Izadinia, 2015; Nghia & Tai, 2017). Regional studies likewise describe identity configuration through practicum reflection and school-based interaction in Indonesia and the Philippines (Ardi et al., 2023; Pane et al., 2025). Korthagen (2010) argues that teacher education is most effective when it deliberately links theory, practical experience, and reflection.

The present study uses the progression from cultural awareness and knowledge toward sensitivity and competent action as a conceptual lens, not as a validated stage model (Jani et al., 2016). Awareness is represented by understanding cultural differences and recognizing

personal bias; perceived readiness for action is represented by confidence in adapting instruction and communicating across cultures; implementation difficulty is represented by challenge ratings concerning lesson planning, classroom management, materials, relationships, and language; and professional growth is represented by retrospective outcome and identity statements. Because the questionnaire indicators are individual self-report items rather than validated subscales, this mapping is interpretive and cannot establish developmental stages or structural relations among the constructs.

The research gap concerns how self-perceived competence, reported implementation difficulty, support use, and professional-growth perceptions occur together during a provincial school-based internship. Philippine studies have examined culturally responsive teaching competence among practice teachers (Caingcoy et al., 2022), developed a contextualized cross-cultural competence measure (Tudayan et al., 2024), and examined associations between cultural competence dimensions and culturally responsive practices (Andal & Panergayo, 2025). However, these domains are commonly investigated separately, and less is known about how open-ended accounts qualify item-level survey patterns within one internship cohort. The study therefore contributes an integrated, context-specific and programmatic description rather than a causal test, a formal scale validation, or a claim of national representativeness.

Accordingly, this study aimed to describe the demographic characteristics of the final analytic sample; examine item-level ratings of cultural competence and implementation challenges; identify reported support resources, mentoring patterns, and professional-development priorities; describe open-ended accounts of cultural diversity challenges, inclusive responses, and professional identity; and integrate the quantitative and qualitative evidence to inform practical support for teaching interns.

METHOD

Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional concurrent embedded mixed-methods survey design with quantitative priority (QUAN + qual). Closed-ended and open-ended responses were collected through the same electronic questionnaire during one data-collection period.

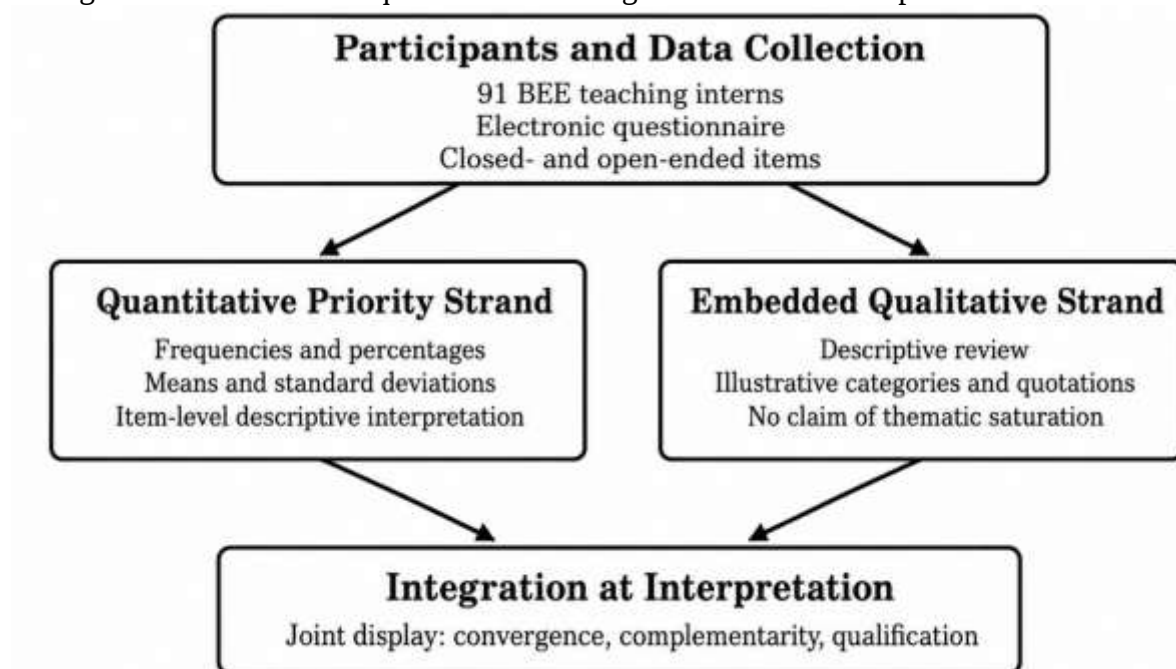


Figure 1. Mixed-Methods Research Process

The quantitative component described item-level ratings, frequencies, and percentages, whereas the embedded qualitative component supplied illustrative accounts of how interns interpreted cultural challenges and professional experiences. Integration occurred during interpretation by comparing the two forms of evidence and presenting a joint display. This approach follows the principle that mixed-methods integration should be visible at the design, interpretation, or reporting level rather than asserted only as general triangulation (Fetters et al., 2013). Joint displays are particularly useful for showing convergence, complementarity, and qualification across quantitative and qualitative findings (Guetterman et al., 2015). Because the design lacks baseline and comparison data, it supports descriptive and interpretive conclusions but not causal claims about internship effects.

Research Setting and Participants

The final analytic sample consisted of 91 Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEE) teaching interns from Pangasinan State University-San Carlos Campus who had completed practice teaching. All quantitative analyses and empirical tables use $N = 91$. The sample was predominantly female ($n = 83$, 91.2%) and aged 20-25 years ($n = 83$, 91.2%). No Bachelor of Technology and Livelihood Education participants or between-program analyses are included. The study is confined to one academic program at one campus and does not establish representativeness of teaching interns elsewhere in the Philippines.

The available materials identify 91 participants as the final analytic sample but do not report the number eligible, invited, responding, partially responding, or excluded, or the reasons for exclusion. A response rate and attrition analysis therefore cannot be calculated. The number of participants contributing to each open-ended prompt was also not documented. The internship was described as culturally diverse and involved local languages, varying traditions, and different learner backgrounds; however, the academic year, internship duration, number and type of placement schools, principal languages or cultural groups, mentor-allocation arrangements, and possible clustering of interns within schools were not available. These omissions are reported explicitly because reconstructing them would create unsupported information.

Research Instrument

Data were collected with a structured questionnaire containing demographic questions; five 5-point self-assessment items concerning cultural differences, adaptation confidence, local perspectives, awareness of bias, and cross-cultural communication; seven 5-point challenge items; multiple-response questions on helpful resources and professional-development priorities; one question on the frequency of seeking mentor guidance; six 5-point items on perceived internship outcomes; one confidence item on culturally responsive teaching; and open-ended prompts about challenges, strategies, and professional identity. Challenge items were anchored from 1 = not challenging at all to 5 = extremely challenging, whereas perceived-outcome items were anchored from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The indicators were analyzed as individual items rather than combined into a composite score.

The questionnaire was reported to have undergone expert review and pilot testing, but supporting documentation was not available for item-development sources, the number and qualifications of experts, decision rules, pilot-sample characteristics, revisions, reliability coefficients, content-validity indices, or construct-validity analyses. The instrument is therefore not described as psychometrically validated. Interpretation is limited to the wording of the reported items, and measurement uncertainty is treated as a substantive limitation.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Ethics

The questionnaire was distributed electronically through Google Forms. Participants reportedly received information about the study purpose, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the right to withdraw before submitting a response. Responses were recorded through the electronic platform, and identifying information was omitted from the analytic presentation. Exact data-collection dates, recruitment procedures, the eligible population, response rate, incentive status, and withdrawal procedures after submission were not documented.

Quantitative analysis was restricted to frequencies and percentages for categorical and multiple-response questions and means and standard deviations for 5-point items. No correlation, demographic-group comparison, program comparison, or hypothesis test is reported because reproducible results for such analyses were not available. Percentages in multiple-response tables use $N = 91$ as the denominator and therefore do not sum to 100%. Open-ended responses were organized through a descriptive content-review procedure into recurring categories concerning language and communication, cultural protocols, inclusion, practical strategies, awareness, and professional identity. The number of usable responses, coder roles, category-development approach, codebook, disagreement resolution, reflexivity, negative-case analysis, and intercoder agreement were not documented. The categories are therefore used only to contextualize quantitative patterns and are not presented as saturated or prevalence-based themes.

The source materials report voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and institutional review and approval. The approving body, approval reference, and approval date were not provided. Google Forms account configuration, access roles, storage location, encryption or access controls, retention period, deletion procedure, and safeguards against deductive identification through placement-school information were also not documented. The manuscript reports the stated ethical protections but cannot independently verify the omitted approval and data-governance details.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Participant Characteristics

The final analytic sample comprised 91 BEE teaching interns. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics used to contextualize the findings. The data describe this sample only; the unavailable recruitment and nonresponse information does not establish population representativeness. The concentration of respondents in one program, age group, and gender category also means that demographic comparisons would be poorly supported even if inferential outputs were available.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of the Final Analytic Sample

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%

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31-35 years old	2	2.2%
36 years and above	1	1.1%
Program		
Bachelor of Elementary Education (BEE)	91	100%

Self-Assessed Cultural Competence and Implementation Challenges

Table 2 presents item-level cultural competence self-assessments. The highest mean concerned understanding how cultural differences affect teaching and learning ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.68$), while the lowest concerned perceived effectiveness in cross-cultural communication ($M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.82$). These means indicate favorable self-perceptions relative to the scale anchors; they do not demonstrate observed competence or a validated latent construct. This distinction is consistent with Siwatu's (2007) treatment of culturally responsive self-efficacy as a belief measure and with culturally responsive teacher-education models that distinguish sociocultural awareness from the ability to enact responsive instruction (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Table 2. Item-Level Cultural Competence Self-Assessments

Cultural Competence Indicator	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	N
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

Challenge Areas in Cultural Competence Implementation

Challenge ratings ranged from $M = 3.13$ to $M = 3.47$ (Table 3). Understanding and addressing cultural differences in the classroom had the highest mean ($M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.08$), followed by creating culturally inclusive lesson plans ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.12$). Communicating with students who primarily used a local language had the lowest mean ($M = 3.13$) but the largest standard deviation ($SD = 1.22$), suggesting comparatively greater variation in respondents' experiences. The pattern therefore does not support describing local-language communication as the most highly rated challenge, although it may have been salient for particular placements.

Table 3. Challenge Ratings for Cultural Competence Implementation

Challenge Area	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	N
Understanding and addressing cultural differences in classroom	3.47	1.08	91

ORIGINAL ARTICLE			
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

The coexistence of self-assessment means above 4.0 and challenge means slightly above the scale midpoint is theoretically plausible. Awareness, confidence, and positive outcome expectations do not necessarily translate into consistent culturally responsive performance (Siwatu, 2007; Deardorff, 2006). Research on culturally relevant education and teacher-diversity training similarly distinguishes endorsement of inclusive principles from the ability to enact them in specific content, linguistic, and classroom-management situations (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Civitillo et al., 2018). The pattern is also compatible with Philippine evidence that cultural knowledge and skills may be more closely related to reported culturally responsive practice than awareness alone (Andal & Panergayo, 2025). Alternative explanations include social desirability, limited comparison standards, placement-specific complexity, and common-method bias when perceptions and outcomes are collected through the same instrument at one time point (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The language-related variation should be interpreted in relation to multilingual pedagogy. Linguistically responsive teaching requires knowledge about language, learners, and scaffolding practices rather than the assumption that goodwill alone resolves communication barriers (Lucas et al., 2008). Culturally sustaining perspectives further emphasize maintaining linguistic and cultural pluralism rather than correcting learners toward one unexamined norm (Paris, 2012). Classroom observation, mentor assessment, lesson-plan rubrics, and placement-language information would be required to determine whether the reported ratings correspond to instructional practice.

Support Resources, Mentoring, and Professional-Development Priorities

Pre-internship orientation was selected as a helpful resource by 79 interns (86.8%), followed by peer support (57.1%) and mentor-teacher guidance (53.8%). Because respondents could select more than one resource, the percentages in Table 4 do not sum to 100%. No numerical effectiveness scale or classification rule was reported, so the table presents selection frequencies only. The prominence of orientation is consistent with evidence that structured preparation can clarify expectations before field experience, but orientation should not be assumed to replace continuing support when unexpected classroom situations arise (McKenzie & Mellis, 2017; Romijn et al., 2021).

Mentor-guidance frequency was uneven (Table 5). Weekly guidance was reported by 41.8% of interns, while 28.6% rarely sought guidance and 11.0% never did so; the combined

rarely-or-never proportion was 39.6%. The survey did not measure mentor availability, meeting schedules, mentoring content, help-seeking preferences, or the match between mentor expertise and the cultural issues encountered.

Table 4. Resources Selected as Helpful for Cultural Competence Development

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

Low utilization therefore cannot be attributed to mentor inadequacy. International research shows that effective mentoring depends on mentor selection and preparation, relational trust, accessible feedback, and a balance between support and challenge (Hobson et al., 2009; Ellis et al., 2020). Mentoring relationships may also influence confidence and professional identity, which reinforces the need to monitor both mentoring frequency and quality (Izadinia, 2015).

Table 5. Frequency of Seeking Mentor-Teacher Guidance

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

Professional-Development Priorities

The most frequently selected professional-development priorities were classroom management in diverse settings (71.4%) and culturally responsive teaching strategies (67.0%), followed by parent or community engagement in Pangasinan (49.5%) (Table 6). These figures represent expressed preferences, not measured deficiencies or proof that a particular intervention will work. Nevertheless, they align with scholarship showing that culturally responsive preparation should integrate sociocultural knowledge, critical reflection, instructional design, language-responsive practice, and field-based rehearsal rather than treating diversity as a stand-alone topic (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Lucas et al., 2008; Gorski & Dalton, 2020). A program response could therefore combine scenario-based discussion, lesson-plan review, role-play, mentor feedback, and structured peer case consultation.

Table 6. Professional-Development Areas Selected by Interns

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%
Curriculum adaptation for local context	8	8.8%

Open-Ended Evidence and Mixed-Methods Integration

The open-ended material provided descriptive context for the quantitative patterns. Because the number of qualitative respondents and the full coding process were not documented, the categories and quotations are illustrative rather than exhaustive, frequency-based, or saturated. One response described students who were hesitant to participate because of language barriers and different traditions; the intern reported using peer support, visual aids, and activities that recognized cultural differences. Other responses referred to adapting teaching, valuing learners' backgrounds, student-centered activities, daily relationship building, and becoming more empathetic and flexible.

A response concerning students who did not use 'po' and 'opo' when speaking with elders requires careful interpretation. It demonstrates that interns notice culturally situated protocols, but culturally responsive practice involves reflection on the cultural basis of the teacher's own expectations. Critical reflection should help interns distinguish respectful dialogue from the uncritical enforcement of one norm or the stereotyping of learners (Gorski & Dalton, 2020). This is consistent with culturally sustaining pedagogy, which asks educators to support pluralism and interrogate practices that privilege one cultural or linguistic pattern (Paris, 2012).

Table 7 shows that respondents rated statements about the perceived influence of the internship from $M = 4.47$ to $M = 4.71$. These values represent retrospective agreement with questionnaire statements, not demonstrated change. The terms 'improved,' 'enhanced,' 'developed,' and 'changed' appeared in the item wording, but the design did not include a pre-internship baseline, comparison group, classroom observation, mentor assessment, or student outcomes. Confidence in implementing culturally responsive teaching was also favorable, with 71.5% selecting confident or very confident and a mean of 3.95 ($SD = 0.82$) (Table 8). Confidence is an important readiness indicator, but it should not be equated with observed instructional competence.

Table 7. Self-Reported Perceptions of Internship Outcomes

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

ORIGINAL ARTICLE			
Changed perspective on education in Pangasinan	4.47	0.74	91
Overall internship experience rating	4.71	0.52	91

Table 8. Confidence in Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching

Confidence Level	n	%
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

The positive outcome ratings and identity-oriented responses indicate that interns attributed professional meaning to the experience. This interpretation aligns with research portraying professional identity as relational, contextual, and continually reconstructed through experience (Beijaard et al., 2004; Izadinia, 2013). Practicum and mentoring studies further show that school interaction, reflection, and mentor relationships can influence preservice teachers' confidence and identity narratives (Izadinia, 2015; Nghia & Tai, 2017). Regional evidence likewise describes identity configuration through reflection and school-based interaction (Ardi et al., 2023; Pane et al., 2025). The defensible inference is that respondents perceived professional growth, not that the internship caused a statistically or developmentally established transformation.

The joint display in Table 9 integrates the two evidence strands. Favorable self-assessments were qualified by moderate implementation challenges and narratives of adaptation; the comparatively low communication self-rating and high variability in the local-language challenge item were contextualized by an account of language-related participation; and positive growth ratings were complemented by a narrative of perceived empathy and flexibility. The strands provide convergence and complementarity, but the qualitative evidence cannot establish prevalence. This explicit integration is consistent with mixed-methods recommendations to show how the datasets interact rather than presenting parallel results without a meta-inference (Fetters et al., 2013; Guetterman et al., 2015).

Scholarly Contribution, Practical Implications, and Limitations

The study contributes a context-specific integration of four connected elements: self-perceived cultural competence, implementation challenges, support utilization, and professional-growth perceptions among BEE interns in Pangasinan. This integration responds to international scholarship that separates culturally responsive beliefs, intercultural assessment, observed practice, mentoring, and identity development into distinct research traditions (Deardorff, 2006; Civitillo et al., 2019; Ellis et al., 2020; Beijaard et al., 2004). Earlier Philippine research has examined practice teachers' culturally responsive competence (Caingcoy et al., 2022), measurement of cross-cultural competence (Tudayan et al., 2024), and

relationships between cultural competence dimensions and culturally responsive practices (Andal & Panergayo, 2025). The present analysis adds a program-level view of how these perceptions coexist with support-use patterns and open-ended accounts; it does not formally test or extend a developmental theory.

Table 9. Joint Display of Quantitative Patterns and Illustrative Open-Ended Evidence

Quantitative Pattern	Illustrative Open-Ended Evidence	Integrated Interpretation
Self-ratings were favorable (M = 4.04-4.42), while challenge ratings remained moderate (M = 3.13-3.47).	Respondents described the need to adapt teaching, use visual aids, encourage peer support, and reflect on inclusion.	Perceived awareness and confidence can coexist with practical difficulty. The strands complement rather than contradict each other.
Cross-cultural communication had the lowest competence self-rating (M = 4.04), and local-language challenge ratings showed the greatest variability (SD = 1.22).	A response described hesitation in group participation associated with language barriers and varying traditions.	Communication challenges were not uniformly experienced, but language and participation were salient for some placements.
Perceived internship outcomes were rated positively (M = 4.47-4.71).	An anonymous response described becoming more empathetic, flexible, and student-centered.	The data converge on positive perceptions of growth, but the evidence remains retrospective and cannot establish developmental change.

Three program actions are supported as proposals for piloting and evaluation. First, program coordinators and mentor teachers could establish a documented protocol for regular case-focused check-ins on cultural communication, classroom management, and lesson adaptation. Second, faculty could strengthen practice-focused preparation through culturally diverse scenarios, lesson-plan review, role-play, and rubric-based feedback. Third, the program could develop local-context resources and structured peer consultation involving language-support strategies and community-informed examples. These actions are consistent with evidence that culturally responsive teacher preparation must be coherent across curriculum and field experience (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Sleeter, 2001), and that mentoring quality depends on professional knowledge, relationships, feedback, and organizational conditions (Hobson et al., 2009; Ellis et al., 2020; Izadinia, 2015). They should be evaluated rather than treated as interventions already proven effective by the present data.

Several limitations constrain interpretation. The study covers one institution and one program, while participant-flow and nonresponse information are unavailable. All quantitative outcomes are self-reported, creating risks of social-desirability and common-method bias

(Podsakoff et al., 2003). The cross-sectional design has no baseline, comparison group, observation, mentor assessment, or student outcome, so causal or developmental claims cannot be made. Interns may be clustered within placement schools, but placement identifiers and school characteristics were not reported or modeled. Instrument development, expert review, pilot testing, construct validity, and reliability are insufficiently documented. The qualitative component lacks the number of usable responses, coder roles, codebook development, reflexivity, disagreement resolution, and negative-case analysis. The ethics-approval identifier and operational data-governance procedures are also absent. Finally, limited contextual description and the absence of accessible data and analysis materials restrict transferability and reproducibility.

Future research should use longitudinal or pre-post designs, include multiple campuses and programs, document participant flow, collect placement-level variables, and combine self-report with observation, mentor ratings, lesson-plan assessment, or learner evidence. Qualitative research should provide transparent coding and trustworthiness procedures and include mentor and placement-school perspectives. Instrument development should be reported in sufficient detail to establish reliability and content or construct validity.

CONCLUSION

Among 91 BEE teaching interns at PSU-San Carlos Campus, self-assessment means above 4.0 coexisted with challenge ratings slightly above the midpoint of the five-point scale. Interns most frequently selected pre-internship orientation as helpful, while 39.6% reported rarely or never seeking mentor guidance. Open-ended responses illustrated language and participation barriers, culturally situated interpretations of behavior, inclusive strategies, and perceived professional identity development. By integrating competence perceptions, implementation difficulty, support use, and professional-growth perceptions, the study provides context-specific evidence for strengthening practice-focused preparation, documented mentoring, and local-context resources. It does not establish observed competence, developmental change, or causal internship effects, and its interpretation remains constrained by incomplete participant-flow, instrument-validation, qualitative-coding, ethics, data-governance, and placement-context documentation.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The de-identified dataset, questionnaire, coding materials, and analysis files were not supplied with the manuscript, and no public repository or controlled-access procedure was reported. The availability of these materials therefore cannot be confirmed from the documentation reviewed.

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