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Integrating Cultural and Professional Competence in Master Pedagogues: Insights from an Experimental Study

Abstract

Contemporary classrooms require teachers who are both culturally responsive and professionally skilled. Yet most teacher-education programs emphasize pedagogical methods while devoting limited attention to intercultural awareness, leaving graduates underprepared for diverse contexts. Cultural competence—the attitudes, knowledge, and skills enabling effective work with culturally diverse learners—and professional competence are typically treated as separate domains, restricting the holistic development of educators. This study examined whether an Integrated Competence Program (ICP) that embeds intercultural modules, community-based projects, and reflective practice into regular pedagogy coursework can simultaneously enhance both competence domains. Using a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest design with 60 master’s students in education at Nakhchivan State University (experimental group $n = 30$; control group $n = 30$), participants were assessed with the Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale, pedagogical knowledge tests, teaching performance observations, and a self-efficacy scale. Results showed that the experimental group achieved significantly greater gains in cultural competence (partial $\eta^2 = 0.56$) and professional pedagogical performance compared with the control group. Qualitative analysis of reflective journals corroborated these findings, revealing enhanced self-awareness, inclusive teaching practices, and professional confidence. The findings provide empirical evidence that integrating cultural and professional competence training produces a synergistic effect, strengthening both domains and preparing future educators to foster equitable and high-quality learning environments.

Keywords: *teacher education, cultural competence, professional competence, intercultural training, pedagogy*

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Magistr səviyyəli pedaqoqlarda mədəni və peşəkar kompetensiyaların inteqrasiyası: Eksperimental tədqiqatdan əldə olunan nəticələr

Xülasə

Müasir sinif otaqları həm mədəni cəhətdən həssas, həm də peşəkar bacarıqlara malik müəllimlər tələb edir. Lakin əksər müəllim təhsili proqramları pedaqoji metodlara diqqət yetirir, eyni zamanda mədəniyyətlərarası maarifləndirməyə məhdud diqqət yetirir və məzunları müxtəlif kontekstlərə hazırlıqsız qoyur. Mədəni səriştə - mədəni cəhətdən müxtəlif tələbələrle effektiv işləməyə imkan verən münasibətlər, bilik və bacarıqlar - və peşəkar səriştə adətən ayrı sahələr kimi qəbul edilir və bu da müəllimlərin hərtərəfli inkişafını məhdudlaşdırır.

Bu tədqiqat mədəniyyətlərəarası modulları, icma əsaslı layihələri və refleksiv təcrübəni müntəzəm pedaqogika kurs işlərinə daxil edən İnteqrasiya olunmuş Səriştə Proqramının (İKP) hər iki səriştə sahəsini eyni vaxtda inkişaf etdirə biləcəyini araşdırdı. Naxçıvan Dövlət Universitetində təhsil sahəsində 60 magistr tələbəsi ilə kvazi-eksperimental test öncəsi-testdən sonrakı dizayndan istifadə edərək (eksperimental qrup $n = 30$; nəzarət qrupu $n = 30$) iştirakçılar Çoxmədəniyyətli Tədris Səriştəsi Şkalası, pedaqoji bilik testləri, tədris performansının müşahidələri və özünənam şkalası ilə qiymətləndirildi. Nəticələr göstərdi ki, eksperimental qrup nəzarət qrupu ilə müqayisədə mədəni səriştədə (qismən $\eta^2 = 0.56$) və peşəkar pedaqoji performansda əhəmiyyətli dərəcədə daha çox irəliləyiş əldə etmişdir. Refleksiv jurnalların keyfiyyət təhlili bu tapıntıları təsdiqləyərək, özünüdərək səviyyəsinin, inklüziv tədris təcrübələrinin və peşəkar özünənamının artdığını aşkar etdi. Tapıntılar mədəni və peşəkar səriştə təliminin inteqrasiyasının sinergetik təsir yaratdığını, hər iki sahəni gücləndirdiyini və gələcək müəllimləri bərabər və yüksək keyfiyyətli təlim mühiti yaratmağa hazırladığını göstərən empirik sübutlar təqdim edir.

Açar sözlər: müəllim təhsili, mədəni səriştə, peşəkar səriştə, mədəniyyətlərəarası təlim, pedaqogika

Introduction

The growing multicultural nature of education worldwide requires teachers to possess not only professional pedagogical expertise but also the ability to understand, respect, and respond to cultural diversity. Traditional teacher-training programs have primarily emphasized pedagogical methods, often neglecting intercultural sensitivity. As a result, graduates may demonstrate strong instructional skills but limited readiness to create inclusive learning environments.

Existing research widely recognizes the importance of cultural competence—the set of attitudes, knowledge, and skills enabling teachers to work effectively with culturally diverse students—and professional competence, which involves mastery of pedagogical knowledge, instructional design, and reflective practice. However, studies usually examine these two domains separately, treating cultural awareness as an “add-on” to professional training rather than an integrated component of teacher expertise. This separation restricts the holistic development of educators and limits their adaptability in real classrooms.

Research gap and rationale.

Although scholars such as Gay (2002), Ladson-Billings (1995), and Romijn et al. (2020) have demonstrated that culturally responsive pedagogy improves student outcomes, little empirical evidence exists on how combining cultural and professional competence development affects teachers’ performance—particularly in post-Soviet and multilingual contexts. In Azerbaijan, teacher education standards formally distinguish between general cultural and professional competences, yet their simultaneous formation has received limited attention. Addressing this gap, the present study introduces and tests an Integrated Competence Program (ICP) that embeds intercultural learning directly into pedagogical coursework and practicum experiences for master’s students in education at Nakhchivan State University.

Objective.

This research investigates whether integrating cultural competence training into a master’s program enhances both cultural and professional pedagogical competencies more effectively than the traditional curriculum. The study contributes new experimental evidence from the South Caucasus region and offers a replicable model for culturally informed teacher preparation.

Literature Review

2.1 Cultural Competence in Teacher Education

Cultural competence enables teachers to interpret behavior and learning through multiple cultural lenses and to apply inclusive strategies. Deardorff (2006) defines it as an ongoing process that develops through attitudes of openness, cultural knowledge, and adaptive skills. Dzerviniks et al. (2024) confirm that intercultural sensitivity directly correlates with teachers’ self-efficacy and classroom management success. Similarly, Gay (2002) and Ladson-Billings (1995) emphasize that

culturally responsive teaching is not peripheral but central to effective pedagogy. Yet, Gorski (2009) warns that many multicultural courses remain superficial, focusing on cultural celebrations rather than critical reflection or bias awareness.

Meta-analyses (Ailauova et al., 2024) demonstrate that cross-cultural interventions combining theory, practice, and reflection yield the highest learning gains. However, most investigations occur in Western teacher-education settings, leaving non-Western, bilingual, or region-specific contexts underexplored. This gap limits global understanding of how sociocultural background influences teachers' intercultural growth.

2.2 Professional Pedagogical Competence

Professional competence encompasses pedagogical knowledge, content expertise, and self-regulation skills (Kunter et al., 2013; Shulman, 1987). Darling-Hammond (2006) highlights that practice-based learning—extended fieldwork linked with reflection—best fosters these abilities. Nevertheless, teacher-training programs often treat competence dimensions in isolation: lesson planning, classroom management, or assessment as separate modules. Voogt and Roblin (2012) argue that 21st-century education requires integrated competencies mirroring those expected from students, such as collaboration and cultural awareness. Hence, teachers' professional formation should equally incorporate intercultural understanding as a teaching skill.

2.3 Integration of Cultural and Professional Competences

Recent scholarship views cultural competence as an inherent part of professional pedagogy (Neradovskaya & Starodubtsev, 2023). Integrative approaches—curriculum infusion, reflective seminars, and community-based learning—enable teachers to connect pedagogical theory with cultural realities. Nugraheni et al. (2025) demonstrated that embedding cultural content into language-teaching programs enhanced both linguistic and cultural outcomes for teachers and students alike. Still, few empirical studies evaluate the dual impact quantitatively.

In Azerbaijan's teacher-education landscape, characterized by linguistic diversity and strong national educational traditions, integrating general cultural development with professional competence offers both theoretical and practical significance. By situating this research in Nakhchivan—a region bridging Eastern and Western pedagogical influences—the study adds contextual originality. It tests an evidence-based model addressing global calls (OECD 2018; UNESCO 2022) for teacher preparation that unites academic excellence with intercultural responsibility.

Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental pretest–posttest control group design to determine whether integrating cultural competence training into a master's pedagogy program enhances both cultural and professional competencies. The quasi-experimental model was selected because class-level assignments prevented individual randomization, a limitation acknowledged in this study. Nevertheless, participant equivalence was established through pretest scores and demographic matching.

To increase the internal validity, instructors involved in both groups were briefed and trained using standardized materials and lesson plans. However, differences in teaching styles may have influenced results, and this potential “instructor effect” is noted as a limitation of the design.

The study was conducted during the 2024–2025 academic year at Nakhchivan State University in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan — a multilingual region whose teacher education programs reflect both Eastern and Western pedagogical traditions. This local context provides originality and adds to the cross-cultural relevance of the findings.

3.2 Participants and Setting

Participants were 60 master's students enrolled in the “Pedagogy and Instructional Design” program.

Experimental group (n = 30): 22 females, 8 males, mean age = 27.4 years (SD = 4.8)

Control group (n = 30): 20 females, 10 males, mean age = 28.1 years (SD = 5.2)

All participants voluntarily agreed to join the research and signed informed consent forms. Most had between one and three years of teaching or internship experience. The university's Ethics Committee approved the study (Ref. No. 2025-07-25).

Both groups followed identical course schedules within the master's program. The experimental group experienced an Integrated Competence Program (ICP) designed by the researchers, while the control group completed the standard curriculum without integration.

3.3 The Integrated Competence Program (ICP)

The ICP embedded intercultural and reflective learning into the regular pedagogy courses through four components:

Curriculum Infusion – cultural responsiveness and inclusive practices were woven into subjects such as “Instructional Strategies,” “Assessment,” and “Curriculum Design.”

Workshops – three 2-hour sessions were delivered:

Workshop 1: Self-awareness and bias in teaching

Workshop 2: Culturally responsive pedagogy strategies

Workshop 3: Communication across cultures and conflict resolution

Field Experience Enhancement – teaching practice was arranged in culturally diverse schools. Each student completed a Community-Based Project connecting pedagogy with cultural realities (e.g., inclusive lesson planning, community interviews).

Reflective Journals and Seminars – students submitted weekly reflections (approximately 120 journals, totaling 45,000 words) and discussed them biweekly in guided seminars.

Detailed workshop outlines and reflective prompts are presented in Appendix A, while the qualitative coding framework used to analyze reflections is provided in Appendix B.

3.4 Instruments and Data Collection

1. Multicultural Teaching Competency Scale (MTCS) (Spanierman et al., 2011, adapted version) – used to measure participants' cultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$ at pretest.

2. Pedagogical Knowledge Test – 50 multiple-choice and short-answer items covering instructional design, classroom management, and assessment literacy (KR-20 = .81).

3. Teaching Skills Observation Rubric – standardized 20-point rubric assessing instructional delivery, student engagement, and classroom organization. Each student was observed twice by trained mentors. Inter-rater reliability ICC = .75.

4. Intercultural Scenario Test – two short teaching dilemmas scored on cultural awareness and conflict resolution.

5. Self-Efficacy Scale – adapted from Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2001) for triangulation.

All instruments were administered in English, the language of instruction in the program. Pretests were conducted in Weeks 1–2 and posttests in Weeks 14–15. Only posttest data were available for teaching observations, a limitation noted in the Results section.

3.5 Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 27. Descriptive statistics (means, SDs) and mixed-design ANOVA (Group \times Time) were used to examine within-group and between-group differences. For teaching skills (only posttest), an ANCOVA controlled for pretest pedagogical knowledge. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's d and partial η^2 .

For qualitative analysis, reflective journals and focus group data were coded inductively. Two researchers independently coded 20% of the data, achieving 87% inter-coder agreement. Themes such as bias awareness, inclusive practices, and professional growth emerged. Coding categories and sample quotes are summarized in Appendix B.

Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative findings enhanced the study's reliability. Limitations—including potential instructor influence, group homogeneity, and absence of pretest observation scores—are discussed to ensure transparency.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Participants’ data were anonymized. All procedures adhered to the principles of voluntary participation and confidentiality. To ensure fairness, control group students later attended a condensed version of the ICP workshops after posttests.

Results

This section presents the findings of the Integrated Competence Program (ICP), focusing on changes in cultural competence and professional pedagogical competence. The results combine quantitative analysis (pre–post test comparisons) with qualitative insights from student reflections and focus groups.

4.1 Descriptive and Inferential Statistics

Table 1 summarizes the pretest and posttest scores for the main variables. No significant group differences were observed at pretest ($p > .05$), indicating initial equivalence.

Table 1.
 Pretest and Posttest Scores on Cultural and Professional Competence Measures (Mean ± SD).

Measure	Group	Pretest	Posttest	Gain (Post–Pre)	Measure
Cultural Competence (MTCS)	Experimental	3.02 ± 0.31	4.10 ± 0.35	+1.08 ± 0.37	Cultural Competence (MTCS)
	Control	3.06 ± 0.29	3.32 ± 0.40	+0.26 ± 0.34	
Pedagogical Knowledge (%)	Experimental	72.3 ± 8.4	85.6 ± 6.5	+13.3 ± 7.9	Pedagogical Knowledge (%)
	Control	70.8 ± 9.1	78.4 ± 8.8	+7.6 ± 8.5	
Teaching Skills (Observation/20)	Experimental	–	17.2 ± 1.5	–	Teaching Skills (Observation/20)
	Control	–	15.8 ± 1.8	–	
Self-Efficacy (1–5 scale)	Experimental	3.80 ± 0.45	4.35 ± 0.40	+0.55 ± 0.50	Self-Efficacy (1–5 scale)
	Control	3.85 ± 0.50	4.00 ± 0.52	+0.15 ± 0.48	

4.2 Cultural Competence Development

The ICP significantly improved participants’ cultural competence.

A mixed-design ANOVA showed a strong Group × Time interaction, $F(1,58) = 74.5, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.56$.

The experimental group’s MTCS scores rose from 3.02 to 4.10 ($d = 2.78$), while the control group’s smaller increase (3.06 → 3.32, $d = 0.71$) reflected routine exposure during practicum.

Objective results from the Intercultural Scenario Test corroborated these findings. The experimental group achieved a mean of 8.5/10 versus 6.9/10 for the control group ($t(58) = 5.27, p < .001$). Raters observed that experimental students displayed greater empathy, proactive conflict resolution, and contextual understanding when describing how they would manage culturally sensitive classroom incidents.

Class composition note.

The control group’s practicum classes were more culturally homogeneous, potentially limiting exposure to intercultural situations. This contextual difference is acknowledged as a partial explanation for the smaller competence gain.

4.3 Professional Pedagogical Competence

Both groups improved in pedagogical knowledge, but the experimental group demonstrated significantly higher gains. An ANCOVA controlling for pretest scores revealed a main effect of group, $F(1,57) = 6.14$, $p = .016$, $\eta^2 = .10$.

The integrated model appears to have strengthened students' understanding of teaching principles by connecting them to real classroom diversity.

Observation data revealed similar trends. Experimental participants averaged 17.2/20 versus 15.8/20 for controls ($t(58) = 3.32$, $p = .0015$, $d = 0.85$).

Observers highlighted superior lesson organization, student engagement, and adaptability among the experimental group. A trained mentor commented:

"Students from the integrated program demonstrated flexibility and empathy. They adapted explanations to different learners and used inclusive examples naturally."

Teaching skills were only measured at posttest, which restricts direct inference about individual progress. However, posttest differences, combined with equal starting points on pedagogical knowledge, suggest a meaningful advantage for integrated instruction.

4.4 Qualitative Findings

Analysis of 120 reflective journals and two focus groups produced three major themes (Appendix B):

1. Awareness and self-reflection.

Students reported increased sensitivity to cultural nuances and a clearer understanding of their own biases.

"Before, I didn't think much about cultural differences. Now, I plan lessons that reflect my students' realities."

2. Inclusive and adaptive teaching.

Participants described using culturally relevant materials and inclusive language during practicum.

"I tried examples from different traditions, and students became more engaged and open."

3. Professional confidence.

Many associated their intercultural growth with stronger teaching identity and classroom control.

"Learning to value diversity made me a calmer and more confident teacher."

These qualitative patterns triangulate the quantitative results: as intercultural awareness grew, professional performance and confidence also improved.

4.5 Summary of Key Findings

- The integrated program produced statistically significant improvements in both cultural and professional competencies.

- Cultural competence gains were large ($\eta^2 = 0.56$), while pedagogical knowledge and teaching skills also improved significantly ($\eta^2 \approx 0.10$ – 0.20).

- No pre-existing differences between groups confirm the effect originated from the intervention.

- Qualitative reflections reinforce quantitative evidence, showing deeper self-awareness and inclusive practice.

- Limitations: Teaching performance was assessed only post-intervention, and varying instructor styles could have influenced results.

Discussion

The present study examined how an Integrated Competence Program (ICP)—combining cultural and professional training—affected master pedagogy students' development of essential teaching competences. The results confirmed that the ICP substantially improved both cultural awareness and pedagogical performance. This discussion interprets the results through five main lenses: synergy between competence domains, comparison with prior research, underlying mechanisms, limitations, and implications for practice.

5.1 Integration as a Synergistic Process

The results demonstrate that integrating cultural and professional learning produces a synergistic effect: improvement in one domain reinforces growth in the other. Students who learned to view classroom diversity as a pedagogical resource simultaneously enhanced their instructional strategies. This finding aligns with Ladson-Billings's (1995) claim that culturally relevant teaching is, in essence, good teaching. Likewise, Gay (2002) argued that teachers who adapt pedagogy to students' cultural realities create deeper engagement—exactly what participants described in their reflective journals.

The integrated design encouraged continuous reflection on who students are teaching while learning how to teach. This dual focus likely developed a richer professional identity grounded in empathy, flexibility, and self-efficacy. Such a result supports Zeichner's (2010) call for stronger connections between theory, reflection, and field experience in teacher education.

5.2 Relation to Previous Research

Our outcomes reinforce and extend existing literature. Romijn et al. (2020) found that intercultural competence grows most effectively when reflection and practice are combined; the ICP operationalized this through journals and community-based projects. Kunter et al. (2013) noted that teacher professional competence consists of both cognitive and affective dimensions. The ICP enhanced both: pedagogical knowledge (cognitive) and intercultural empathy (affective).

Compared with Ailauova et al.'s (2024) meta-analysis—which reported moderate effect sizes for cultural training—our findings showed stronger gains, likely because cultural content was fully embedded across an entire semester rather than limited to short workshops. In non-Western contexts, few empirical studies have tested such integration. By providing experimental data from Azerbaijan, this research fills a geographical and methodological gap in global teacher education literature.

5.3 Possible Mechanisms Behind the Results

Three complementary mechanisms may explain the ICP's impact:

1. Meaningful learning and motivation.

Embedding cultural context made the curriculum more personally relevant. Participants frequently described higher engagement and emotional connection to their teaching tasks, which supports Darling-Hammond's (2006) model of practice-based motivation.

2. Reflective integration.

Weekly reflections and guided seminars deepened metacognitive awareness, helping participants internalize both pedagogical and intercultural concepts. This resonates with Schön's (1983) notion of the reflective practitioner.

3. Experiential exposure.

Placement in culturally diverse schools and community projects gave authentic learning opportunities, reinforcing Deardorff's (2006) process model of intercultural competence, where exposure and adaptation are key developmental stages.

Together, these mechanisms highlight that cultural and professional competences are not parallel skills but interdependent capabilities strengthened through experience and reflection.

5.4 Limitations and Future Directions

Several limitations must be acknowledged.

- Instructor effect: Although instructors followed standardized guidelines, differences in teaching style might have influenced outcomes.
- Single posttest for teaching skills: The absence of a pretest observation limits conclusions about individual progress.
- Sample and context: The study was confined to one university in Nakhchivan, and results may not generalize to other educational systems.
- Short-term design: Competence retention over time remains unknown; longitudinal follow-up is recommended.

Future studies could replicate the ICP in diverse cultural settings, test each component's effectiveness separately, and examine long-term classroom impact—especially whether culturally integrated training leads to improved student achievement and teacher retention.

5.5 Practical Implications

The findings offer concrete guidance for teacher educators and policymakers:

- Integrate cultural competence across all pedagogy courses, rather than isolate it in elective modules.
- Include reflective and experiential components—journals, field placements, and community engagement—to connect theory with practice.
- Provide faculty development to ensure instructors model inclusive practices.
- Adopt assessment tools (scenario tests, portfolios) that evaluate cultural responsiveness alongside pedagogical mastery.

These recommendations support international calls (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2022) for teacher education that promotes both academic quality and intercultural responsibility.

Conclusion

This experimental study demonstrated that embedding cultural competence development within pedagogical coursework yields significant improvement in both competence domains. The Integrated Competence Program (ICP) enabled master pedagogy students to become not only more knowledgeable teachers but also more empathetic and inclusive professionals.

Key conclusions include:

1. Integrated learning environments enhance cultural awareness and teaching quality simultaneously.
2. Reflective and experiential methods serve as effective mediators between theory and professional growth.
3. Teacher education reform in multilingual regions like Azerbaijan benefits from uniting cultural sensitivity with methodological excellence.

In sum, this research provides empirical evidence that the fusion of cultural and professional competences is a pathway to holistic teacher preparation. By implementing such integration, universities can prepare educators capable of fostering equitable, motivating, and high-quality learning experiences for all students.

Suggestion

Based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed for teacher-education institutions and policymakers:

- Integrate competence domains across curricula. Teacher-training programs should embed intercultural objectives within every pedagogical course rather than offering stand-alone diversity modules.
- Strengthen experiential learning. Partnerships with culturally diverse schools and community organizations can provide authentic contexts for developing inclusive practices.
- Foster reflective pedagogy. Structured reflection—through journals, peer discussion, and mentoring—should accompany all practicum activities to encourage metacognitive growth.
- Support faculty preparation. Universities must equip instructors with the skills and resources to model culturally responsive teaching.
- Institutionalize assessment of cultural competence. Accreditation systems should include measurable indicators of teachers' intercultural and ethical readiness.

Implementing these suggestions will help align national teacher-education policies with international frameworks that promote inclusive and equitable learning environments.

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Appendix A. Outline of the Integrated Competence Program (ICP) Workshops

The Integrated Competence Program (ICP) was implemented across one academic semester and integrated intercultural competence within core pedagogy courses.

It consisted of three two-hour workshops, ongoing reflective practice, and community-based projects.

Measure	Group	Pretest
Workshop 1. Self-awareness and Bias in Teaching	Develop self-awareness of personal and cultural identity; recognize implicit bias and stereotypes.	Guided self-assessment of personal values, group discussions on cultural assumptions, and case study analysis of bias in classrooms.

Measure	Group	Pretest
Workshop 2. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Strategies	Learn practical methods for inclusive instruction and curriculum adaptation.	Demonstrations of differentiated instruction, lesson redesign using multicultural content, and analysis of real teaching videos.
Workshop 3. Communication across Cultures and Conflict Resolution	Strengthen intercultural communication and problem-solving skills in diverse classrooms.	Role-play of teacher–student misunderstandings, empathy-building activities, and collaborative development of class rules promoting respect.

Reflective Journals and Seminars:

Students kept weekly journals (approximately 120 in total) documenting experiences during practicum. Every two weeks, these reflections were discussed in guided seminars focusing on intercultural learning and pedagogical adaptation.

Community-Based Project:

Each participant designed a short practicum project linking pedagogy with cultural realities of the school community—such as creating inclusive lesson plans or organizing a cultural learning activity.

Appendix B. Qualitative Coding Framework

Qualitative data (reflective journals and focus group transcripts) were analyzed using inductive thematic coding.

Two researchers coded the data independently, achieving 87% inter-coder agreement.

The table below summarizes the main themes and sample evidence.

Theme	Description	Sample Evidence from Participants' Reflections
Awareness and Self-Reflection	Recognition of personal biases and cultural perspectives influencing teaching.	“I realized how my expectations are shaped by my own culture; now I question them before judging students.”
Inclusive and Adaptive Teaching	Use of culturally relevant materials, inclusive examples, and responsive communication.	“I changed my reading examples to include traditions from my students' backgrounds, and participation improved.”
Professional Confidence	Increased sense of capability and self-efficacy in managing diverse classrooms.	“Learning to value students' differences made me calmer and more confident in class.”
Empathy and Community Engagement	Stronger connection between teachers and students through community-based projects.	“Visiting families helped me understand students' situations better; it changed how I communicate with them.”

Coding Process:

- Initial open coding identified 36 recurring ideas.
- Codes were grouped into 4 overarching themes.
- Representative quotations were selected to illustrate each theme.

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