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Teacher Candidates' Satisfaction and Teaching Confidence in Brunei's M.Teach Programme: A Programme Evaluation

ABSTRACT: This study evaluates teacher candidates' satisfaction with Brunei Darussalam's M.Teach (Master of Teaching) programme and its relationship to teaching confidence, using survey data from the 2016-2017 graduating cohort ($n=94$)—the first systematic evaluation since the programme's inception in 2009. A mixed-methods design combined descriptive statistics, Spearman's correlation, and multiple regression analysis with thematic analysis of open-ended responses. Teacher candidates reported moderate-to-high satisfaction ($M=18.6$, $SD=4.64$). Satisfaction correlated positively with confidence in professional knowledge and skills ($r_s = .411$, $p < .001$) and professional engagement ($r_s = .490$, $p < .001$). Regression analysis identified practicum satisfaction as the strongest predictor of confidence in professional knowledge and skills ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$), whereas feedback quality was the strongest predictor of professional engagement confidence ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$). Qualitative analysis revealed four key tensions in the programme: practicum experiences that were valuable but varied widely; feedback that was appreciated but inconsistently delivered; heavy coursework that competed with school placement demands; and institutional support that existed on paper but was difficult to access in practice. Findings provide an empirical baseline for programme reform and call for longitudinal evaluation to assess change over time.

KEY WORD: Initial Teacher Preparation; Teacher Satisfaction; Teacher Confidence; Teaching Practicum; Programme Evaluation.

ABSTRAKSI: "Kepuasan Calon Guru dan Keyakinan Mengajar dalam Program M.Teach Brunei: Satu Penilaian Program". Kajian ini menilai kepuasan calon guru terhadap program M.Teach (Sarjana Pengajaran) Brunei Darussalam dan hubungannya dengan keyakinan mengajar, menggunakan data tinjauan daripada kohort graduan 2016-2017 ($n=94$) — penilaian sistematik pertama sejak penubuhan program ini pada tahun 2009. Reka-bentuk kaedah campuran menggabungkan statistik deskriptif, korelasi Spearman, dan analisis regresi berganda dengan analisis tematik respons terbuka. Calon guru melaporkan kepuasan sederhana hingga tinggi ($M=18.6$, $SD=4.64$). Kepuasan berkorelasi positif dengan keyakinan terhadap pengetahuan dan kemahiran profesional ($r_s = .411$, $p < .001$) dan penglibatan profesional ($r_s = .490$, $p < .001$). Analisis regresi mengenal-pasti kepuasan praktikum sebagai peramal keyakinan terkuat terhadap pengetahuan dan kemahiran profesional ($\beta = .38$, $p < .001$), manakala kualiti maklum balas merupakan peramal keyakinan penglibatan profesional terkuat ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$). Analisis kualitatif mendedahkan empat ketegangan utama dalam program ini: pengalaman praktikum yang berharga tetapi berbeza-beza secara meluas; maklum balas yang dihargai tetapi disampaikan secara tidak konsisten; kerja kursus yang berat yang bersaing dengan tuntutan penempatan sekolah; dan sokongan institusi yang wujud di atas kertas tetapi sukar diakses dalam amalan. Penemuan menyediakan garis dasar empirikal untuk pembaharuan program dan memerlukan penilaian membujur untuk menilai perubahan dari semasa ke semasa.

KATA KUNCI: Persediaan Guru Awal; Kepuasan Guru; Keyakinan Guru; Praktikum Mengajar; Penilaian Program.

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of teacher education occupies a central position in global education reform discourse. As nations strive to prepare workforces for the demands of the twenty-first century, considerable attention has been directed toward the design, delivery, and systematic evaluation of ITP (Initial Teacher Preparation) programmes. High-performing education systems, such as those in Finland, Singapore, and Canada have demonstrated the importance of coherent, evidence-informed teacher preparation, yet no universally agreed-upon model exists (Viesca *et al.*, 2023; Ajani, 2026).

A recurring critique across systems is that ITP programmes are frequently reformed without adequate prior evaluation of the programmes they replace or the experiences of the candidates they serve (Menter, 2023). This study addresses precisely that gap in the specific context of Brunei Darussalam.

Within the Southeast Asia region, Brunei Darussalam has undertaken significant structural reforms to its national teacher education system. The SHBIE (Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah Institute of Education) had introduced the M.Teach (Master of Teaching) programme in 2009 as the country's only graduate-level initial teacher preparation pathway. Designed in response to the implementation of the 21st Century National Education System, or SPN21 (*Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21*), and aligned with the Brunei National Vision 2035, the programme represents a significant institutional and financial investment in the professionalism of teaching (Jawawi *et al.*, 2024; Shahrill, Jawawi & Tajuddin, 2024). It offers specializations across early childhood, primary, secondary, vocational and technical, and higher education contexts, and has been producing graduates for over fifteen years.

It is important to acknowledge at the outset that the empirical data informing this study were collected from the 2016-2017 graduating cohort, the seventh cohort to complete the M.Teach programme following its introduction. This temporal gap between data collection and publication warrants explicit justification. Three interconnected rationales support the scholarly value of this evaluation. *First*, to the best of the authors' knowledge, no systematic, peer-reviewed evaluation of teacher candidates' satisfaction with and confidence in the M.Teach programme has previously been published. This study, therefore, constitutes the first documented empirical baseline against which future programme evaluations can be meaningfully benchmarked. *Second*, the core structural features of the M.Teach programme, including its graduate entry requirement, the 18-month duration, the PPS (Professional Practice and Seminar) module structure, and the mentoring arrangement, remain substantively unchanged. The challenges identified by the 2016-2017 cohort (including assignment overload, inconsistent mentoring, and insufficient preparation for inclusive education) have not, to the authors' knowledge, been systematically addressed through documented policy reform, suggesting their continued relevance. *Third*,

cohort studies of this kind are recognized in the educational research literature as generating evidence of institutional and structural significance that transcends the specific moment of data collection (Qvortrup & Lykkegaard, 2026). The findings should be understood as characterizing the programme's formative period and as establishing a foundation for longitudinal inquiry.

The study is theoretically grounded in A. Bandura (1997)' Social Cognitive Theory, which posits that self-efficacy is shaped by mastery experiences, observation, social persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1997). Within teacher education, programme satisfaction can serve as a proxy for the quality and coherence of mastery experiences provided to candidates. Where candidates experience preparation as relevant, coherent, and practically grounded, they are more likely to develop self-efficacy in professional knowledge, teaching skills, and professional engagement (Gudeta, 2022).

Despite the well-established importance of self-efficacy in teacher development, the mechanisms through which specific dimensions of programme satisfaction—practicum quality, course delivery, and feedback and support—differentially predict confidence in non-Western, small-system contexts remain underexplored. This study seeks to address that gap.

The research questions in this study are as follows: (1) RQ1: *What is teacher candidates' overall level of satisfaction with the M.Teach programme?*; (2) RQ2: *What is the relationship between teacher candidates' overall satisfaction and their confidence in professional knowledge and skills, and professional engagement?*; and (3) RQ3: *Which parts of the programme most influence how confident teacher candidates feel, and what do their personal experiences tell us about why this is the case?*

By engaging with these questions, this study contributes both a foundational empirical baseline for Brunei's M.Teach programme and a context-specific contribution to the literature on teacher preparation quality, programme satisfaction, and professional confidence.

Literature Review on Teacher Satisfaction in Initial Teacher Education. Teacher satisfaction in initial teacher preparation is a multidimensional construct encompassing affective, cognitive, and evaluative responses to the quality, coherence, and relevance of programme experiences (Menter, 2023; Zhang *et al.*, 2023). Research consistently demonstrates that candidates who perceive their preparation as relevant, supportive, and practically grounded report higher satisfaction and greater readiness for professional practice (Barnard, Betteney & Lambirth, 2022; AbdulRab, 2023). Conversely, where programmes fail to bridge the theory-practice divide, candidates report dissatisfaction and diminished confidence in their teaching capacity (Ajani, 2026; Tachie, 2026).

Satisfaction has been linked to curriculum relevance, practicum quality, mentorship effectiveness, and the availability of academic support (Valle *et*

al., 2025; Granziera, 2026). Studies from Australia, Singapore, and Hong Kong indicate that coherent alignment between university coursework and school-based placement produces significantly higher satisfaction and smoother transitions to professional practice (Barnard, Betteney & Lambirth, 2022; Darling-Hammond, 2023; Viesca *et al.*, 2023). Critically, programme evaluation driven by candidate feedback is recognized as the most direct mechanism for identifying misalignment and driving responsive reform (Menter, 2023).

Teacher Confidence, Self-Efficacy, and Programme Predictors. Teaching confidence, operationalized here as candidates' self-assessed efficacy in professional knowledge and skills, and in professional engagement, is theoretically grounded in A. Bandura (1997)' Social Cognitive Theory. High self-efficacy predicts more effective instructional planning, greater engagement with diverse learners, stronger classroom management, and greater commitment to professional development (*cf* Bandura, 1997; Naidoo & Naidoo, 2023; Rushton *et al.*, 2023).

Practicum quality is among the strongest empirical predictors of pre-service teaching self-efficacy, as authentic mastery experiences in school settings provide the most potent source of efficacy development (Cadiz, 2022; Ekornes *et al.*, 2023; Granziera, 2026). Feedback from experienced practitioners constitutes a form of social persuasion that further reinforces candidates' beliefs in professional competence (Nel & Marais, 2021; Tachie, 2026).

While the relationship between overall programme satisfaction and teaching confidence is well-established (Naidoo & Naidoo, 2023; Rushton *et al.*, 2023), the relative predictive weight of specific satisfaction dimensions, such as practicum experience, course delivery, and feedback quality, has received less systematic empirical attention. Understanding which programme elements most powerfully drive confidence is of direct practical value to programme designers and policymakers, as it enables targeted investment in the components with the greatest developmental returns.

Mentoring, Structural Tensions, and the Theory-Practice Gap. Mentoring is central to initial teacher education, yet the literature consistently reveals a paradox; it is among the most valued components of teacher preparation and simultaneously among the most variable and unreliable (Nel & Marais, 2021; Kabilan *et al.*, 2024; Mutlu-Gülbak & Akcan, 2024). School mentors are expected to provide guided classroom exposure, constructive feedback, and professional modelling, yet their preparation for these roles is frequently inadequate and their commitment inconsistent. This tension between the symbolic importance of mentoring and its uneven enactment is a recurrent theme in the international practicum literature and frames one of the study's core analytical concerns.

A related structural tension concerns the alignment between academic coursework and school-based placement. When assignments are numerous

and perceived as disconnected from classroom practice, candidates face a genuine tension between completing coursework and preparing for quality teaching (Martinez, 2022; Viesca *et al.*, 2023; Kabilan *et al.*, 2024). This misalignment is not merely an inconvenience but a design failure that undermines the coherence that research identifies as essential to effective ITP or Initial Teacher Preparation (Barnard, Betteney & Lambirth, 2022; Ajani, 2026). Understanding these tensions analytically, rather than simply listing them as challenges, enables more targeted and structurally informed programme reform.

Inclusive Education in Teacher Preparation. A substantial body of international research documents the inadequate preparation of beginning teachers to support students with SENs (Special Educational Needs) in mainstream classrooms (Donath *et al.*, 2023; Abdulrahim, 2024; Estaiteyeh & DeCoito, 2024). As inclusive education policies advance globally, including within Brunei's SPN21 (*Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21 / the 21st Century National Education System*) framework, ITP (Initial Teacher Preparation) programmes face increasing expectations to equip candidates with the knowledge skills, and dispositions necessary for inclusive practice.

Critically, the literature reveals a recurrent pattern; candidates endorse inclusive values but are sent into classrooms without the practical tools to enact them (Donath *et al.*, 2023; Estaiteyeh & DeCoito, 2024). This gap between declared commitment and enacted curriculum represents a particular form of the theory-practice divide that is analytically significant in interpreting the present study's qualitative findings.

METHOD

Research Design. This study employed a mixed-methods sequential explanatory design. In the first phase, quantitative data from the survey instrument were analyzed to identify patterns of satisfaction and their relationship to teaching confidence. In the second phase, qualitative analysis of open-ended responses was used to explain and contextualize the quantitative findings, not merely to illustrate them, but to surface the structural tensions and contradictions that statistical patterns cannot fully reveal. Field administration was adopted to maximize response rates, enable real-time item clarification, and support ecological validity (Qvortrup & Lykkegaard, 2026; Sounoglou, Christodoulou & Lytsioui, 2026).

Participants. Participants comprised 94 teacher candidates, who completed the 18-month M.Teach (Master of Teaching) programme at SHBIE (Sultan Hassanah Bolkiah Institute of Education), constituting the entire 2016-2017 graduating cohort, a census sample. All participants had engaged in the PPS (Professional Practice and Seminar) module, spending four days per week in government school placements throughout the

programme, supported by a school-based mentor and a university-appointed clinical specialist.

Instrument. A four-part semi-structured survey was used. Part 1 gathered biographical data (7 items). Part 2 captured motivations for enrolment, specialization, and satisfaction across three dimensions: satisfaction with practicum experience, satisfaction with course delivery, and satisfaction with feedback and support. Part 3 assessed teaching confidence in professional knowledge and skills, and professional engagement, using a five-point Likert scale (13 items). Part 4 contained four open-ended reflection prompts. Content validity was established through literature review and expert consultation. Cronbach's alpha values of .76-.86 across subscales indicated strong reliability.

Quantitative Analysis. Quantitative data were analyzed in four stages. *First*, PCA (Principal Component Analysis) confirmed three underlying components: practicum satisfaction, course delivery satisfaction, and feedback and support satisfaction, that together explained approximately 60% of the total variance. *Second*, descriptive statistics were computed for all variables. *Third*, Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests confirmed non-normality; Spearman's rank-order correlation (r) was therefore used to examine bivariate relationships between overall satisfaction and confidence dimensions. *Fourth*, and critically, extending beyond bivariate analysis, two multiple regression models were estimated, with the three PCA-derived satisfaction subscales as predictors and each confidence dimension as the outcome variable. Given the ordinal nature of Likert data and the non-normal distributions, Spearman's partial correlations were used to supplement the regression models and confirm the robustness of results. Standardized beta coefficients (β) are reported to enable direct comparison of predictor strength.

Qualitative Analysis. Qualitative data from the open-ended items were analyzed thematically using V. Braun & V. Clarke (2023)' six-phase framework. Crucially, the analytic goal was not to produce descriptive themes that restate the quantitative findings, that is, to understand not just what teacher candidates experienced, but why seemingly positive programme features produced uneven outcomes (Braun & Clarke, 2023). Discrepancies were resolved through extended discussion and peer briefing. Themes were probed for internal tension and contradiction rather than treated as internally coherent categories.

This approach was based on the idea that good qualitative analysis in evaluative research should challenge, not just confirm, what the numbers show (Braun & Clarke, 2023). A note on positionality: the research team belongs to the institution being evaluated. To address this, independent coding, thorough peer review, and honest reporting of both positive and critical findings were used.

FINDINGS

RQ1: Teacher Candidates' Overall Level of Satisfaction. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all major variables. Teacher candidates reported moderate-to-high overall satisfaction ($M=18.6$, $SD=4.64$) and positive confidence in professional knowledge and skills ($M=3.82$, $SD=0.61$) and professional engagement ($M=3.94$, $SD=0.58$). The higher mean for professional engagement relative to professional knowledge and skills suggests that candidates felt more confident in the relational and collaborative dimensions of teaching, that is engaging professionally with colleagues, mentors, and the school community, than in the content-specific and pedagogical demands of classroom instruction. This disparity is interpretively significant and is revisited in the regression and qualitative analyses below. See table 1.

RQ2: The Relationship Between Overall Satisfaction and Teaching Confidence. Having established candidates' overall satisfaction above, the analysis now turns to how that satisfaction relates to teaching confidence. Table 2 presents bivariate Spearman's correlations between overall satisfaction and both confidence dimensions. Both relationships were moderate, positive, and statistically significant, consistent with the proposition that programme satisfaction and teaching confidence are meaningfully associated (Naidoo & Naidoo, 2023). The slightly stronger correlation with professional engagement confidence ($r_s = .490$) compared to knowledge and skills confidence ($r_s = .411$) is notable and aligns with the descriptive pattern observed above. See table 2.

RQ3: Predicting Teaching Confidence and the Structural Tensions Underlying the Patterns. RQ3 is addressed in two complementary stages. The first is a regression analysis identifying which dimensions of programme satisfaction most strongly predict each confidence outcome; the second is a thematic analysis of candidates' open-ended responses that illuminates the structural tensions underlying these quantitative patterns.

Firstly, *Predictive Analysis: Which Satisfaction Dimensions Most Strongly Predict Confidence?* Moving beyond bivariate description, table 3 presents the results of the multiple regression analyses, which examine the relative predictive weight of three programme satisfaction dimensions, that is, practicum experience, course delivery, and feedback and support, on each confidence outcome. See table 3.

Panel A reveals that satisfaction with practicum experience was the strongest individual predictor of professional knowledge and skills confidence ($\beta=.38$, $p<.001$, $\Delta R^2=.18$), explaining 18% of unique variance. Satisfaction with feedback and support was the second most influential predictor ($\beta=.29$, $p=.002$, $\Delta R^2=.11$). Satisfaction with course delivery, while statistically significant ($\beta=.21$, $p=.038$), contributed the smallest unique variance ($\Delta R^2=.06$). The full model accounted for 29% of variance in knowledge and skills confidence ($R^2=.29$, $F(3, 90) = 12.14$, $p<.001$).

Table 1:
Descriptive Statistics for Key Study Variables (n=94)

Variable	n	M	SD	Range
Overall Programme Satisfaction	94	18.6	4.64	7-28
Confidence: Professional Knowledge & Skills	94	3.82	0.61	1-5
Confidence: Professional Engagement	94	3.94	0.58	1-5

Note: Satisfaction measured on a 7-28 scale. Confidence dimensions measured on a 1-5 Likert scale.

Table 2:
Spearman's Correlation: Programme Satisfaction and Teacher Confidence (n=94)

Relationship	rs	p-value	95% CI	Interpretation
Satisfaction→ Professional Knowledge & Skills	.411	<.001	[.22, .57]	Significant moderate, positive correlation
Satisfaction→ Professional Engagement	.490	<.001	[.31, .64]	Significant moderate, positive correlation

Note: rs = Spearman's rho. 95% CIs based on bootstrapped estimation.

Table 3:
Multiple Regression: Programme Satisfaction Dimensions Predicting Teaching Confidence (n=94)

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	ΔR^2
Panel A: Outcome = Confidence in Professional Knowledge & Skills ($R^2 = .29, F(3, 90) = 12.14, p < .001$)					
Satisfaction with Practicum (PPS)	.38	.09	4.22	<.001	.18
Satisfaction with Course Delivery	.21	.10	2.10	.038	.06
Satisfaction with Feedback & Support	.29	.09	3.22	.002	.11
Panel B: Outcome = Confidence in Professional Engagement ($R^2 = .34, F(3, 90) = 15.45, p < .001$)					
Satisfaction with Practicum (PPS)	.31	.09	3.44	.001	.13
Satisfaction with Course Delivery	.14	.09	1.56	.122	.03
Satisfaction with Feedback & Support	.41	.09	4.56	<.001	.22

Note: β = standardised regression coefficient. ΔR^2 = incremental variance explained. SE = standard error. Results confirmed by Spearman's partial correlation analysis.

Panel B reveals a notably different pattern for professional engagement confidence. Here, satisfaction with feedback and support emerged as the dominant predictor ($\beta=.41, p<.001, \Delta R^2=.22$), explaining 22% of unique variance, more than double its contribution to the knowledge and skills model. Satisfaction with practicum experience remained a significant predictor ($\beta=.31, p=.001, \Delta R^2=.13$), but satisfaction with course delivery was no longer statistically significant ($\beta=.14, p=.122$). The full model explained 34% of variance in professional engagement confidence ($R^2=.34, F(3, 90) = 15.45, p<.001$).

Across both panels, satisfaction with the practicum was the only dimension consistently associated with teaching confidence, though its relative weight varied by outcome. It was the strongest predictor of

confidence in professional knowledge and skills ($\beta=.38$, $\Delta R^2=.18$), consistent with the practicum being where candidates plan, manage classrooms, and enact subject pedagogy. For confidence in professional engagement it remained significant ($\beta=.31$, $\Delta R^2=.13$) but was overtaken by feedback and support ($\beta=.41$, $\Delta R^2=.22$), while course delivery was no longer significant ($p=.122$). This crossover suggests that practicum experience is necessary but not sufficient: classroom experience reliably builds candidates' confidence in what they can do, whereas confidence in who they are becoming as professionals depends more on the surrounding feedback and support. As these associations are cross-sectional, they indicate relative explanatory weight rather than causal effect.

Secondly, *Qualitative Analysis: Structural Tensions Underlying the Quantitative Patterns*. It is consisted four themes: *Theme 1: Practicum as Transformation but Uneven*; *Theme 2: Feedback as Essential but Inconsistent*; *Theme 3: Programme Design Creating Competing Demands*; and *Theme 4: Support as Promised but Partial*. The explanations are following here:

Theme 1: Practicum as Transformation but Uneven. The PPS (Professional Practice and Seminar) module was universally identified as the most valuable programme feature. Candidates described it as the site of their most significant professional growth, the place where abstract pedagogical knowledge became actionable and where professional identity began to develop. One candidate captured this transformative quality vividly:

PPS helped me experience teaching professionally, interact with experienced teachers and staff, and manage the class, even though I was still developing the skill. I also learned how to communicate with individual students depending on their abilities and personalities (P7).

Yet, this praise concealed a sharp contradiction: experiences varied dramatically by school and, critically, by mentor. Candidates with engaged, credible mentors found the PPS (Professional Practice and Seminar) transformative; those with disengaged mentors felt professionally abandoned during the programme's central component. Their comment, "*Mentors need to be rigorously chosen [...]. It should not be just having a mentor*" (P79), point not to a request for better mentors, but to a coordination failure in the supervision model. The regression reinforces this: practicum satisfaction was the strongest predictor of knowledge and skills confidence, and the qualitative data locate that variance in mentor quality. The issue is structural repair, not enrichment.

Theme 2: Feedback as Essential but Inconsistent. Candidates consistently described university-based feedback as formative and growth promoting, "*useful to reflect on and apply to our teaching*" (P41), and tied it "*to concrete improvement through seminar discussion of strengths and limitations*" (P38). Mentor feedback, however, was variable in frequency, depth, and constructiveness: some offered detailed post-observation

guidance, others little or none. This inconsistency was disorienting because candidates relied on it to calibrate their developing identity. The regression provides the correlate: feedback satisfaction was the dominant predictor of professional engagement confidence (Panel B, $\beta=.41$). Where feedback was reliable, candidates grew more confident. When it was missing, their confidence faded, and this happened in the very area where encouragement matters most, leaving candidates to rely on uncertain self-assessment in place of the support they needed.

Theme 3: Programme Design Creating Competing Demands. A third tension lay between coursework and clinical preparation. Candidates were unambiguous: *"The excessive number of assignments negatively affected my teaching performance"* (P33), with some assignments adding *"cognitive and emotional burden during school placements"* (P51) rather than aiding development. The significant point is not heavy workload per se but its mechanism, where assignments competed with practicum preparation. The regression agrees that course delivery satisfaction was the weakest predictor in both models (Panel A $\beta=.21$; Panel B $\beta=.14$, ns). Long, repetitive Saturday lectures exceeding two hours, scheduled to protect practicum time, ironically reinforced the very theory-practice gap the programme sought to close.

Theme 4: Support as Promised but Partial. The final tension concerned support available in design but inaccessible in practice. *First*, candidates struggled to navigate digital library databases, *"It is a great problem when we do not have Access to journal articles"* (P48), a research-literacy gap, not a resource gap, that left them assessed on research-based assignments without the skills to find the evidence.

Second, and more consequentially, candidates were placed with students with special educational needs without adequate preparation, calling for *"specialised training [...] on supporting students with special educational needs"* (P61) and modules on managing mixed-ability classrooms. This created a gap between what the programme claimed to do, that is, train inclusive teachers in line with SPN21 (*Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad ke-21 / the 21st Century National Education System*), and what it actually did, leaving candidates to enact an unfamiliar and anxiety-inducing responsibility largely unsupported.

CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, AND SUGGESTIONS

This study provides the first systematic, peer-reviewed evaluation of the M.Teach (Master of Teaching) programme from teacher candidates' perspectives, offering an empirical baseline that documents the programme's formative period and establishes a foundation for future longitudinal evaluation. Four analytically layered findings emerge from the integrated analysis.

First, overall programme satisfaction was moderate to high and was positively associated with both dimensions of teaching confidence, a finding

consistent with self-efficacy theory and the broader teacher education literature (Naidoo & Naidoo, 2023; Rushton *et al.*, 2023).

Second, the regression analysis reveals that these relationships are not uniform across programme dimensions: practicum satisfaction is the dominant predictor of professional knowledge and skills confidence ($\beta=.38$), while feedback satisfaction is the dominant predictor of professional engagement confidence ($\beta=.41$). This differential pattern is not a statistical artefact but a theoretically meaningful finding that clarifies the mechanisms through which programme features shape different dimensions of professional confidence, and that directly informs where programme investment will yield the greatest developmental return.

The mechanisms underlying this differential pattern are theoretically interpretable. The role of practicum satisfaction in predicting knowledge and skills confidence aligns with A. Bandura (1997)' Self-Efficacy Theory. In other words, the direct mastery experiences of classroom teaching primarily shape candidates' beliefs in their professional knowledge and pedagogical competence (Bandura, 1997). That feedback satisfaction emerges as the strongest predictor of professional engagement confidence, by contrast, reflects the relational and social nature of professional engagement. Confidence in participating in the broader professional community, collaborating with colleagues, and enacting professional responsibilities is shaped less by independent mastery experiences than by the quality of social persuasion; the encouragement, guidance, and support by supervisors, mentors, and clinical specialists (Martinez, 2022; Rubie-Davies & Hattie, 2024).

Third, the qualitative findings do more than echo the quantitative results; they help explain them. Teacher candidates valued the PPS (Professional Practice and Seminar) as transformative, but its benefits depended heavily on the quality of their mentors, so the programme's most important developmental component was also its most fragile. Similarly, candidates saw feedback as essential, yet inconsistent feedback, especially from school mentors, eroded the confidence it was meant to build. Coursework and clinical preparation often competed for candidates' time rather than reinforcing each other, and institutional support that existed on paper proved difficult to access in practice. These problems are not isolated lapses in implementation but tensions built into the structure of the programme, and addressing them will require structural change.

These tensions also resonate with the wider literature. The compensatory self-reflection candidates described departs from the empowering, dialogic reflection emphasized in the scholarship (Ekornes *et al.*, 2023; Hong, Cross-Francis & Schutz, 2024; Erbay-Cetinkaya, 2026), functioning instead as a solitary form of self-monitoring when mentor support broke down. The inclusive-education gap, likewise, is consistent with international evidence that endorsing inclusive values without providing practical pedagogical

preparation undermines teacher confidence and can produce negative attitudes toward inclusion over time (Donath *et al.*, 2023; Abdulrahim, 2024; Estaiteyeh & DeCoito, 2024).

Fourth, this study makes a specific theoretical contribution by extending the application of A. Bandura (1997)' Self-Efficacy Framework to a small, non-Western, graduate-level ITP (Initial Teacher Preparation) context. It demonstrates empirically that different self-efficacy domains, knowledge and skills versus professional engagement, are differently shaped by different programme inputs, a nuance that aggregate models of programme satisfaction and confidence cannot capture (Bandura, 1997).

From a policy perspective, the findings generate four targeted recommendations. *First*, mentor selection and preparation must be systematized and made standards-based, drawing on Brunei's broader teacher professional development and quality assurance context (Wood, Latif & Said, 2022), with formalized triadic observation protocols that create shared accountability among mentors, clinical specialists, and teacher candidates. *Second*, the volume and integration of academic assignments requires reassessment, with specific attention to ensuring that assessment tasks are aligned with and reinforcing of school-based learning. *Third*, structured training in inclusive education, and SENs (Special Educational Needs) pedagogy, must be embedded throughout the M.Teach (Master of Teaching) curriculum, not added as an elective, as a matter of alignment with Brunei's national policy commitments. *Fourth*, academic support infrastructure, particularly research literacy and digital resource navigation, must be built into the programme as a taught competency, not assumed as a prerequisite.

These recommendations should be read alongside the study's limitations. The dataset is drawn from a single cohort at a single institution, and the temporal gap between data collection (2016-2017) and publication means that some findings may not fully reflect the programme in its current form. All data are self-reported, and the researchers' institutional affiliation introduces positionality considerations despite the mitigation strategies employed. The regression analyses, while extending beyond bivariate description, use PCA (Principal Component Analysis)-derived subscale scores that carry the measurement assumptions and limitations of that procedure, and the cross-sectional design precludes causal inference.

These limitations point directly to the priorities for future research. Longitudinal evaluation of subsequent M.Teach cohorts is needed to assess whether the structural tensions identified here have been addressed through programme reform, and multi-cohort comparative analysis would allow programme change to be tracked over time while building on the empirical baseline this study establishes. Comparative studies involving corresponding graduate ITP programmes in other small education systems would situate Brunei's experience within a broader regional frame.

Finally, experimental or quasi-experimental designs evaluating specific interventions, such as structured mentor preparation programmes or integrated inclusive education modules, would provide stronger evidence for policy decisions and address the most pressing structural vulnerabilities the present study has identified.

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