ASIA PACIFIC JOURNAL of Educators and Education
Since 1979

Manuscript Title: Adaptations of Malaysian Private School Teachers in Brunei Darussalam: A Bourdieusian Framework

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Accepted Date: 10 July 2025

Please cite this article as: Lee, Y. L., Choong, Y. C., Tay, K. J., Vasodavan, V., & Samuel, M. S. G. (2025). Adaptations of Malaysian private school teachers in Brunei Darussalam: A Bourdieusian framework. *Asia Pacific Journal of Educators and Education* (Early view).

EARLY VIEW

Adaptations of Malaysian Private School Teachers in Brunei Darussalam: A Bourdieusian Framework

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Abstract. The number of teachers teaching overseas is on the rise. Globally, it is estimated that there will be 800,000 expatriate teachers in 2026. Teaching overseas offers an opportunity for self and professional development. Yet, expatriate teachers are confronted with several challenges in the new host country, leading to employer turnover. Previous studies have assumed that expatriate teachers who moved from the Eastern to Western countries or vice versa faced greater cultural shock and thus, needed to take more actions to adapt to the new teaching environment. The adaptation of teachers who teach within the ASEAN countries is under research. Using Bourdieu's theoretical framework, this study investigated the differences experienced by Malaysian private school teachers teaching in Brunei Darussalam, their adaptation strategies and the types of resources that facilitated their adaptation process. This research involved 10 Malaysian teachers teaching at private schools in Brunei Darussalam. Data was collected through interviews, coded and categorised into themes based on the key concepts - *field*, *habitus* and *capital*, in Bourdieu's theory. The results showed that there were differences in teaching between the two countries in terms of the education system, school culture and facilities. The teachers underwent intercultural, psychological, instructional and language adaptations. Transitions into a new teaching environment could be facilitated by social and cultural capital. This study highlights the need to understand the challenges expatriate teachers experience during the transition period in the new host country and provide adequate support for a smooth adaptation process.

Keywords: Adaptation, expatriate teachers, Brunei Darussalam, Bourdieusian Framework

INTRODUCTION

Academic mobility, including the crossing of international borders by teachers, is on the rise (Kim, 2017). It is estimated that there are 10,000 international schools worldwide employing teachers from around the globe (Bunnell, 2017). By 2026, the number of expatriate teachers will reach 800,000 (Bunnell, 2017). For teachers who teach abroad, or expatriate teachers, academic mobility is a good opportunity for personal and professional growth. as well as, for gaining attractive financial remuneration (Kim, 2017). However, studies have also shown that expatriate teachers face several challenges such as unfamiliarity with the education system, school culture (including language), policies and administrative milieu in the new school environment (Kim, 2017; Jeannin, 2018). Researchers attribute the high attrition rate among expatriate teachers to culture shock, when they confront sharp differences from their home country (Bassett, 2018). Most of the studies on expatriate teachers focus on those who moved from Eastern countries to Western countries and vice-versa (Bassett, 2018; Hanson, 2003), assuming that there are more cultural differences between the East and West. Studies of academic mobility within the same continent, especially in Southeast Asia, are scarce. Currently, there are about 30,000 Malaysians residing and working in Brunei Darussalam, showing that they are potential subjects for investigations (United Nations, 2020). In addition, foreign workers in Brunei primarily come from Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and some countries from South Asia (Ullah & Kumpoh, 2018). Yet, research on their career experiences, education and driving forces for moving to this country is scarce. Thus, our study attempted to close the gap mentioned by studying the differences in teaching experienced by Malaysian private school teachers in Brunei.

Expatriate teachers need to adopt various types of context-dependent adaptation strategies to strive on in the host country (Baruah & Gogoi, 2016; Bassett, 2018; Chen, 2016; Hanson, 2003; Martyn, 1988; Wang, 2002; Zhao et al., 2018). A vast quantity of research has examined the challenges faced by expatriate teachers in the host country (Bassett, 2018; Martyn, 1988) and their adaptation strategies. The push-pull theory, focusing on the motivation and decisions for mobility, still dominates the studies on academic mobility (Shen et al., 2022) . Yet, few studies investigate these issues from the lens of a sociology theory. This study draws on the three key concepts in Bourdieu's Cultural Theory - *field*, *habitus* and *capital* – to explore expatriate teachers' adaptation strategies in response to differences they experienced in Brunei.

In Bourdieu's Theory, the educational attainment of a social group depends on the interrelation between field, habitus and capital (Bourdieu, 1977). *Field* or social space can be defined as 'a configuration of relations' between individuals and institutions that are mediated by different forms of capitals, rules and issues (Bourdieu, 1984). Individuals experience the interactions of diverse cultural norms, values and power structures in the various fields they maneuver. These interactions shape their self, identity,

aspirations, behaviours and capabilities through interactions with members in the fields (Hart, 2019). Most of this research focused on expatriate teachers who moved from Western countries to Eastern countries and vice versa. This assumes that there are more differences between these *fields*, leading to greater culture shock. Conceptualising the teaching context in Brunei as the *field*, this study investigates the differences experienced by Malaysian teachers in this *field*.

There is an ongoing exchange between the *field* one resides and his/her *habitus*. *Habitus* is a set of internalised structures unconsciously built through socialisation and experience, which influences how an individual acts and reacts in a *field* (Lane, 2011). Although the social structures embodied in habitus do not determine one's behaviour, an individual will normally act in accordance with social structures which have shaped one's practices (Power, 1999). *Habitus* protects one from ''crises and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible'' (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 61). *Habitus* derives psychological stability and adaptability by staying in a *field* where the social norms and rules of games one is familiar with, resembling "a fish in the water" (Calmak et al., 2021; Ivemark & Ambrose, 2021). However, one may experience a tension between the acquired habitus in a new field where the capital loses its advantages, resulting in *hysteresis* (Cakmak et al., 2021; Hsieh, 2020; Ivemark & Ambrose, 2021). When hysteresis occurs, the existing *habitus* becomes dysfunctional and one may feel discomfort, not being able to fit into the new field (Radogna, 2019). This disjuncture causes *habitus adaptation*, where habitus is gradually adjusted to the new field (Radogna, 2019). Bordieu does not provide further explanation on how individuals respond to these disjunctures (Chamack et al., 2021). Putting in our research context, when Malaysian teachers moved to Brunei, they might experience hysteresis due to different collective beliefs and social norms between the two countries, resulting in a need to adapt. This study seeks to explore how Malaysian private school teachers' *habitus* adapted dynamically to the new teaching circumstances in Brunei.

Capital refers to the investment of resources with expected returns in the marketplace" (Lane, 2011). Bordieu (1984) delineates three types of *capital*: economic, social and cultural capital for social class promotion. Economic capital is related to financial matters, family income, monetary assets and inherited wealth (Hart, 2019). Social capital involves building and developing social networks with the community (Hart,2019; Power, 1999). Acting in a manner that is socially accepted can lead to positive outcomes, and thus, a form of return (Lane, 2011). Cultural capital refers to "the aspects of culture, such as family background, traditions, education, attitudes, behaviour, and taste that are privileged in society and typically help achieve economic success." (Lane, 2011, p. 22). Cultural capital can be further broken down into embodied cultural capital, linguistic cultural capital, objectified cultural capital and institutionalised cultural capital. Embodied cultural capital refers to the knowledge acquired through socialisation into culture and tradition of a field. It influences one's characters and ways of thinking, making one more receptive in a field with similar cultures. Linguistic cultural capital is one's mastery

of language and his/her communication skills. Objectified cultural capital consists of one's tangible property, such as books, scientific apparatus, or jewelry. Institutionalised cultural capital refers to recognition received from an institution, primarily in the form of academic credentials or professional qualifications. Culture capital can be promoted by social capital when one has a network of social connections with others in the field. This implies that there is an interplay between these three forms of capitals, and one form of capital can be converted to another (Bourdieu, 1984). Limited accessibility to capitals may lead to deprivation of privileges and chances for success (Lane, 2011).

Our study aimed to answer the following three research questions from the lens of Bourdieu's theory:

1. What are the differences in the *field* experienced by Malaysian private school teachers in Brunei?
2. How *habitus* adapts in response to the differences between teaching in Malaysia and Brunei?
3. What type of *capital* can facilitate Malaysian private school teachers' adaptation process?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Education System in Brunei Darussalam

The goal of education in Brunei is to prepare the young generation for future roles as capable, creative, thinking and innovative citizens, who would uphold the local social values inherent in the national philosophy embedded in the Malay Islamic Monarchy or *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB) (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam, 2013). While strengthening national identity is one of the main agenda in education as articulated in the *Wawasan Brunei 2035*, the Brunei education system also addresses the need to develop human capital (Ebil & Shahrill, 2024). In 2009, the Ministry of Education (MoE) proposed a new policy named National Education System for the 21st Century (*Sistem Pendidikan Negara Abad Ke-21*, better known as SPN21) (Ebil & Shahrill, 2024). Among the aims of SPN21 are to raise the quality of education in line with global development and to address the challenges of the social and economic development of the 21st century (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam, 2013). SPN 21 indicates a transformation in the delivery of education, particularly in the nature and structure of curriculum and assessment (Ebil & Shahrill, 2023).

Formal education in Brunei comprises basic education, post-secondary and higher education. Basic education takes eleven years, consisting of primary education (Year 1 to Year 6) and secondary education (Year 7 to Year 11) (Omar Ali & Abdullah, 2023). Students at public schools and private schools go through the same education system, using the same curriculum at the secondary level.

Students sit for Brunei General Certificate of Education (GCE) 'O' Level when they are in Year 11. Post-secondary education consists of sixth form (Year 12 and 13), which is an extension of secondary education. Students sit for Brunei Cambridge 'A' level, which allows them direct entrance to higher education institutions as well as technical and vocational colleges in Brunei and other foreign countries. Although the Malay language is the official language of Brunei, English is the main medium of instruction in most primary and secondary schools as well as colleges and universities (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam, 2013).

The quality of teaching staff is a crucial factor for realizing government education policies. Brunei Teacher Standards highlights the need to promote teachers' accountability, recognize teaching professions and develop teachers' professional knowledge and skills. Two approved teaching training institutions in Brunei are Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Institute of Education (SHBIE) at the University of Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and Kolej Universiti Perguruan Ugama Seri Begawan (KUPU SB). SHBIE offers various courses at degree, masters and doctorate levels for preservice and in-service teachers (Ministry of Education Brunei Darussalam, 2013), including Master of Teaching (M.Teach) programme, which allows qualified graduates to be employed by MoE as teachers in government schools. Whereas, KUPU SB offers specialised training programs related to Islamic teaching (Ebil & Shahrill, 2023). Unlike appointments in government schools, for private schools the school authorities are responsible for recruiting and employing teachers, subject to government approval.

Expatriate Teachers' Adaptation Strategies

Adaptations refers to a continuous process of adapting or modifying one's behaviour or attitudes to meet the demands of a changing environment (Baruah & Gogoi, 2016; Ducheva, 2010). When moving to a new host country, expatriate teachers need to adapt to the new school environment, teaching staff, non-teaching staff , students, curriculum, social norms and policies (Ducheva, 2010). Teachers who are able to adapt their behaviour, socio-psychological aspect and interactions with others will develop more positive attitudes towards their job (Baruah & Gogoi, 2016) leading to a success in their career. Their self-esteem, job satisfaction, motivation and local language proficiency will also improve (Soong & Daly, 2010;Vermote et al., 2022). If a person fails to adapt to the culture in the host country, he/she tends to develop the feeling of hostility and marginalization (Davies, 2001). Eventually he/she will withdraw from the new job. Therefore, expatriate teachers strive to practice different types of adaptation strategies, including inter-cultural adaptation, personal adaptation, financial adaptation, language adaptation and instructional adaptation (Baruah & Gogoi, 2016; Bassett, 2018; Chen, 2016; Hanson, 2003; Martyn, 1988; Wang, 2002; Zhai et al., 2018).

Intercultural adaptation refers to "process by which participants adapt to a new environment that features a cultural background different from their own" (Liu et al., 2022, p.4). It involves a change in habitual conducts or behaviours to fit into the community one lives (Bhat & Beri, 2016). It is the capacity to compromise, establish connections, address challenges and collaborate with others while adapting mental and behavioural processes (Neely-Prado et al., 2019). Building social networks is a way to promote psychological well-being of expatriate teachers when they adapt in an intercultural context (Wang, 2002). A good relationship with other expatriate teachers is helpful for nurturing a sense of belonging, adaptability and workplace success (Bassett, 2018; Wang, 2002). Visiting colleagues and attending parties could improve expatriate teachers' relationships with the school community (Martyn, 1988). Interacting with host-country citizens allows expatriate teachers to learn local culture (Bassett, 2018). The teachers in Remennick's (2001) study joined the Immigrant Teacher Association which provides counseling, career consultation and networking for them to blend into a new teaching environment. Community service engagement can increase intercultural awareness, personal growth and acceptance by parents (Soong & Daly, 2010).

Instructional adaptation can be defined as "a teacher action that was a response to an unanticipated student contribution, a diversion from the lesson plan, or a public statement of change" (Parsons et al., , 2018, p.4). Expatriate teachers need to adjust their instructions to better facilitate student learning in the host country. For instance, in Basett's (2019) study, expatriate teachers adopted new learning techniques such as note-taking and writing on index cards to cater for the needs of their non-native English-speaking students. Expatriate teachers attend orientation programmes and training organised by the host schools (Bassett, 2018). These programmes prepare them to use the teaching resources in schools and help them understand how to interact with parents, students and other community members.

Psychological adaptation was adjustment of emotional satisfaction and well-being, measured via individual stress, depression and life satisfaction (Ye & Dong, 2021). Expatriate teachers change their mindset to develop a positive view of the host culture. They strive to fit into the host cultures instead of expecting their own cultural needs to be fulfilled (Bassett, 2018). When they encounter cultural misunderstandings, they view them as opportunities to learn and gain experiences (Johnston, 1999).

Language is an issue faced by expatriate teachers when they teach in foreign countries (Chen, 2016; Johnston, 1999; Remennick, 2001). In a non-native English-speaking context, teachers use different pronunciation adjustment strategies to help their students improve their pronunciation. Some of the strategies used are speech rate modification, intonation emphasis and oral gestures display (Chen, 2016). Some expatriate teachers learned the native language of the host country to communicate with the parents and colleagues (Remennick, 2001).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

This study involved ten Malaysian private school teachers. Purposeful sampling was used to select the participants based on two criteria. First, these teachers were teaching at private schools (i.e., Chinese private schools, English private schools and home schools) and international schools. Since there is a limited opportunity for Malaysians to teach in public schools, we excluded this school type from our research. Second, only participants who have worked in the teaching profession for at least five years in Brunei were invited to participate in this study. The figure of attrition for beginning teachers leaving within their first five years of teaching is high (den Brok et al., 2017)). Including teachers who managed to get through the first five years of their teaching will provide a more thorough picture on how they adapt to the teaching environment in Brunei.

One is teaching at an international school while nine are teaching at different private schools. The teaching experience ranges from 6 years to 16 years. They are from either teaching language subjects or science and mathematics. The interviewees' profiles are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant profile

Teachers	Gender	Highest qualification	Type of school taught	Number of year teaching in Brunei	Subject
T1	Male	Bachelor of Arts (Linguistics)	Private School	6	English
T2	Female	Master of Education	Private School	9	Science
T3	Female	Bachelor of Science	Private School Home School	16	Science
T4	Female	Bachelor in TESL	Private School	15	English
T5	Female	Bachelor in Mathematics	Private School	12	Math
T6	Female	Bachelor in Biomedical	Private School	9	Science
T7	Female	Bachelor in Malay Studies	Private School	9	Malay language
T8	Female	Master of Educational Psychology	Private School International School	9	Chinese language
T9	Female	Bachelor of Education (Chinese Language)	Private School	6	Chinese language

T10	Female	Bachelor in Malay Literature	Private School	6	Malay language

Data Collection

Data was collected using one-to-one online open-ended interviews. Two researchers, each interviewed five participants, using three open-ended questions so that the participants could voice their experiences without being constrained by any perspectives of the researchers (Creswell, 2008). The three questions were "What are the differences between teaching in Malaysia and Brunei", "What are the strategies you used to adapt to these differences?" and "What type of resources can facilitate your adaptation process". These questions were formulated in corresponding with the concept of *field*, *habitus* and *capital*. Follow-up questions were asked based on the responses provided by the participants. Each interview took about 1 hour and was recorded. Follow up interviews were conducted with six teachers to gain a more in depth understanding of how different types of capitals facilitated their adaptations in the teaching contexts in Brunei based on their responses in the first round of interview.

Data Analysis

All the interview data was transcribed verbatim. The data was coded by three coders (i.e., The first, second and third authors) separately. Then, the codes were reviewed and revised based on the consensus of the three coders. Across the entire process, approximately 10% changes were made. Then, the codes were collapsed into themes in response to the three research questions until the point of saturation where no new theme emerged.

To ensure the credibility and transferability of the study, the documentation of data allowed for an audit trail. Besides, the fourth author acted as a peer debriefer, reviewed the transcripts, emerging and final themes from the transcripts. Member checking was adopted where the transcripts and codes were returned to the interviewees to check for accuracy and resonance with their shared information.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

***Field*: Differences between Teaching in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam**

"*Fields*", according to Bourdieu, are "networks of social relations, structured systems of social position within which struggles or maneuvers take place over resources, stakes and access" (Everett, 2002, p. 60). In this study, we investigated the differences experienced by the Malaysian teachers in the "*field*"

– the educational context in Brunei. Two major themes which emerged from the data are the education system, school culture and facilities, as shown in Figure 1.

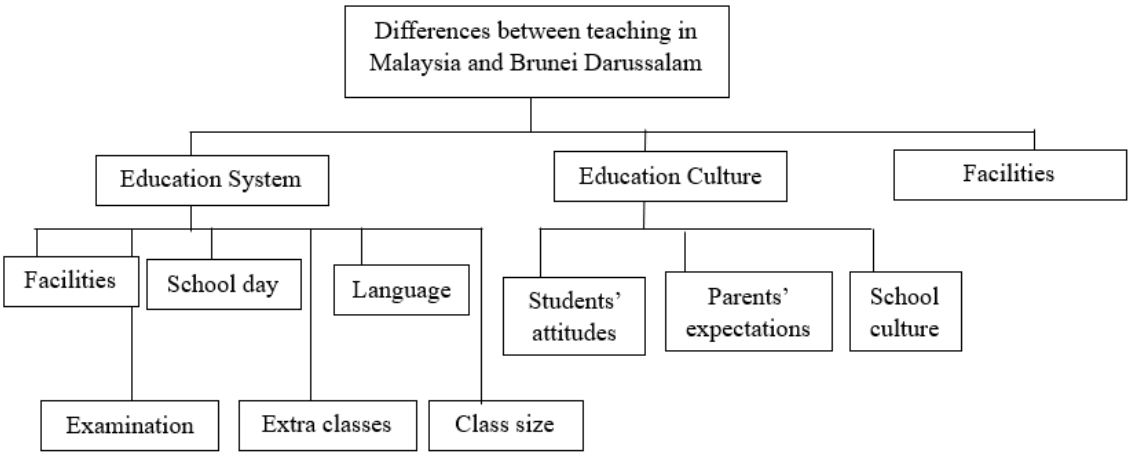

Figure 1. A summary of differences between teaching in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam

Education System

All the teachers mentioned the different syllabus and examinations in both countries. National secondary schools and private schools in Brunei Darussalam use the curriculum of GCE 'O' Level, International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) or International Baccalaureate (IB). The curricula used in secondary schools in Malaysia are more diverse, depending on the school types. National secondary schools in Malaysia use *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM).* Independent Chinese schools offer a combination of the curricula used in China and Taiwan along with the Malaysian national curriculum. For instance, T7 explained, "…*In Malaysia, we use the SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) syllabus, while in Brunei, they use the GCE 'O' Level syllabus*." T5 added, "*In Brunei, the syllabus at the secondary level focuses more on Cambridge 'O' level while Malaysians use their own syllabus which is SPM.".*

Primary school teachers in Malaysia referred to *Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Rendah* (*KSSR*) as a standard guideline for teaching. This was not the case in Brunei. The teachers were unaware of the availability of the curricula at the primary school level. They referred to the Scheme of Work (SOW) from the past year to decide the content to be delivered. As a primary science teacher, T2 shared, *"...I wonder what's the syllabus? No teacher could answer this question. My head of department guides us based on the past year questions (from Primary School Examination (Penilaian Sekolah Rendah -*

PSR)…Ms. SE (a colleague) told me she teaches the lessons based on the previous scheme of work." T6 shared the same opinion and referred to the science syllabus used in Singapore.

However, T4 explained that they did have a written curriculum, yet she could not cite the name of the curriculum. She added that the schools in Brunei did not use a standardised textbook, "*They do not have textbooks…Teachers teach the lessons based on the written curriculum…Frankly, I have never seen their curriculum, but I believe they have. Perhaps some topics compiled in a document."*

T8 added that, "*In terms of textbooks, the international school I am teaching at now uses the IGCSE syllabus and its textbooks. Previously, when I was teaching in Brunei Chinese private school, we used the Singapore textbooks which follow the Singapore Chinese subject syllabus…"*

The examination system in both countries is different. Students from independent Chinese schools in Malaysia sit for Unified Examination Certificate (UEC) at the end of their school year. The national standardised examination in Malaysia is Primary School Achievement Test (*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah - UPSR*) for primary school students and Malaysian Certificate of Education *(Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia SPM)* upper secondary school students. In Brunei, primary school students sit for Primary School Examination (*Penilaian Sekolah Rendah - PSR*). Secondary school students sit for GCE 'O' level, IGCE and A level. T1 added that the focus of the examinations was different, "*In terms of the teaching content or examination syllabus, they are totally different. 'O' level English puts more focus on understanding, applying and analysing… Such questions will not be found in the UEC examination. The UEC examination focuses more on grammar items, for example, error, identification and work forms."*

The school days in both countries are different. T9 explained, "*The class schedule here is from Monday to Thursday, and Friday is a day off, but classes are still held on Saturday. Sunday is a day off…In Malaysia, we had classes from Monday to Friday, and Saturday and Sunday were days off.*"

The medium of instruction in all schools in Brunei Darussalam is English. The medium of instruction in schools in Malaysia is different, depending on the school types and school level. For instance, T9 said,"…*In Brunei*, *the texts students hear and see daily are mostly in English... When I taught in a Chinese primary school in Malaysia, all subjects were taught in Chinese language, except for English and Malay language…"* T5 shared the same thought*, "Schools in Brunei use more English. This school (in Malaysia) uses English and Chinese*."

However, even for Malay language subjects, there is still a difference in terms of the language used. T10 said, "*In the GCE 'O' level Malay language subject, the Brunei Malay language is included in the*

syllabus. Brunei dialect is also included in the syllabus but just a small portion…However, most students in Brunei, especially Malay students, will use Brunei Malay in their essays or oral test…"

The teachers noticed that there is a difference in class size. T8 said, "…*The number of students here is much smaller than in Malaysia. When I taught at a private school before, there were around 20 students per class. In the current international school, at most I have only 10 students. I think this is different from Malaysia where the class usually has a larger number of students, around 40 to 50.*"

School Culture

The differences between the school culture in Brunei and Malaysia can be discussed from the aspects of students' attitudes towards learning, parents' expectations and school policies. There is a difference in the students' learning attitudes towards the Malay language. T10 said, "*In Brunei, Malay language is just a subject, maybe two subjects include MIB (Melayu Islam Beraja), so they don't really focus on it. It's a surprise, because we know that the Brunei government puts a lot of effort into the Malay language. However, you can see that the students' not really put much effort into studying the Malay language*." Malaysian students will put more effort into the Malay subject, because students will not be certified in SPM if they failed in the Malay language subject.

Differences in parents' expectations were also reported, T6 said the parents expected the examination questions to be taken from the topics or the exercises completed in the classrooms. In Malaysia, questions relevant to the syllabus were acceptable. T6 continued to explain that parents relied on learning resources used in the classroom, "*...They keep on doing the same revision paper. They do not have too many references, so they only can depend on the notes from the revision paper."*

There are also a few differences in the school administration systems, lesson planning, school rules and assembly. Teachers in Brunei private schools were not required to write daily lesson plans, but this was not the case in Malaysia. T8 said, *"...I think the best thing about teaching in Brunei is that you don't need to write daily lesson plans. In Malaysia, no matter which school you're teaching at, you must write a daily lesson plan.*"

In terms of the school assembly, T5 mentioned, *"...In Malaysia, every week we have to attend (assembly)…I am not sure about other schools in Brunei. But this school doesn't have a weekly assembly.*"

T5 also pointed out the differences in school rules, *"…They (students) can choose not to tie their hair. They can wear shirts for physical education...You can just wear sportswear or sports shoes…"*. She further added that *"…I don't see any school prefect…they don't have the merit and demerit system…"*

School Facilities

From the aspect of school facilities, T4 and T6 thought that schools in Brunei were more well-equipped with advanced technological devices compared to Malaysia, T6 explained, "...*My previous school has a high usage of technology, including Microsoft. In the current school (in Brunei), they have tried to upgrade all the software and hardware…"* Technology integration also affected the formulation of school rules in Brunei. Students were allowed to bring mobile phones to school. T5 stated, *"…Students can bring their phone to school. They can actually use their phone anytime. But with the supervision from the teachers…*".

***Habitus* Adaptation Strategies in Response to Differences between Teaching in Malaysia and Brunei**

Drawing on participants' descriptions of their adaptation experiences in Brunei, we identified four different *habitus* adaptations: Intercultural adaptation, psychological adaptation, instructional adaptation and language adaptation as shown in Figure 2.

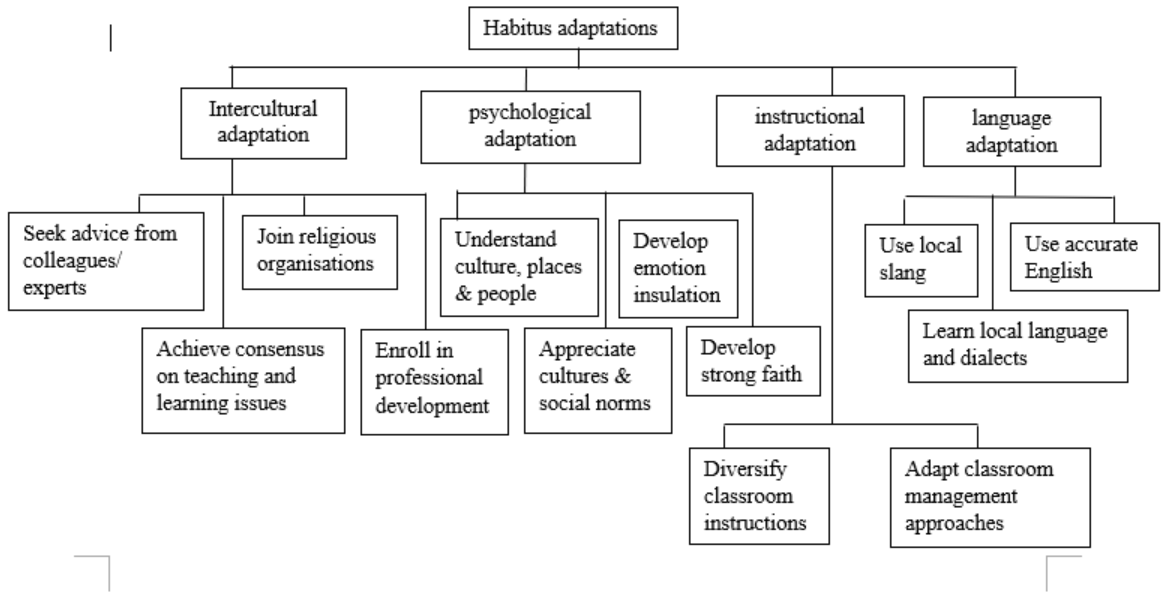

Figure 2. A summary of *habitus* adaptation strategies adopted by Malaysian teachers teaching in Brunei Darussalam

Intercultural Adaptation

Intercultural adaptation happened in various forms. All teachers mentioned that they attempted to understand the school culture, workflow and operating system of the new school when they started to teach in Brunei. They sought advice and guidance from their superiors and colleagues. For instance, T5 said, "*I had conversations with my colleagues from my department (Mathematics)…I learned by observing and listening. From them, I knew that parents of different batches have different cultures and characters. I learned different ways of handling them…My head of department will verbally explain or demonstrate the school policy or how the school system works.*"

Both T2 and T6 emphasised the need to talk to their colleagues, especially the local Bruneian colleagues, to understand the student background as to minimise conflicts with the parents. For example, T6 said, "*I asked the teachers who had taught the children…How are their parents? If the parents are very fussy, then I would use another way to deal with their children to avoid direct confrontation with the parents*". A similar statement was shared by Teacher T2, "*The Board of Directors is very influential in this school. We need to be more careful when we deal with their family members…The local colleagues told me which family the children come from…I knew what I could and could not do so that I would not offend them.*"

Besides the colleagues from the same department, T1 also exchanged ideas with colleagues from other departments, "*I communicated and worked with teachers from different backgrounds…We got to exchange ideas of lesson designs. I managed to get some new ideas about teaching methods and students' characteristics.*"

T6 added that she had discussions with her colleagues who taught the same grade to achieve consensus on certain issues. She explained, *"I discussed with my colleagues to achieve consensus on the marking scheme. The school wanted us to standardize all the markings. So if you give half marks for a particular answer for your students, the other teachers also need to follow…*"

The teachers also attempted to gain a better understanding of the curriculum requirements by seeking advice from external experts. Recalling her experiences, T7 explained, "*Once I was assigned by the Head of Department to attend a briefing organised by the Ministry of Education. The teachers used both standard Malay language and Bruneian dialects. I could not fully understand the explanations. Then I contacted the speakers, asking for more detailed explanations and clarifying a few issues with him*."

Five teachers mentioned that joining a religious group helped them adapt faster in the new environment. For example, T5 said, "*I joined a church group. I received emotional support from the members. Our friendship developed and made me feel more settled in a new environment. This also broadened my network. I met people of different professions, including teachers. They gave me guidance and advice when I face challenges in my career*."

Since the schools in Brunei use the Cambridge GCE 'O' level curriculum at the upper secondary level, the teachers enrolled in courses to get familiar with this curriculum. T5 said, "*I am Mathematics and Additional Mathematics. I paid for the courses under Cambridge so I could understand the content and the marking schemes better*."

All the teachers recognised that each country and school have their unique culture. They attempted to understand and appreciate the different cultures, social norms, people, and places in the host country. For instance, T7 talked to local people to understand Bruneian cultures, "*No matter where we go, I think first thing is we should learn about that country. We should socialise with the local people so that we are familiar with their culture*". She further added the need to understand the "places" through visits, "*...When we talk about Kampung Air, people think of houses built on the water…When I was to teach my students to write an essay or a script about Kampung Air, I visited Kampung Air, talking to people staying there. I went to the library there to look for information as there is very little information on the internet*".

T3 and T9 explained that developing a sense of appreciation of the cultures and costumes of the host country helped them blend into the host country. For instance, T3 said, "*I know that Brunei is also a Malay culture centered country. It (the Islamic culture) is very interesting. When I grow to understand more about the Islamic culture, I come to appreciate it…*"

On the other hand, occasionally, the teachers chose to ignore the negative elements that intervened with their adaptations. T3 explained that she practiced "emotional insulator", where she ignored some bad experiences that fell upon her. "I *just went with the situation (one student lodged a complaint against her to the Ministry of Education), but I didn't retaliate so I guess I was numb*."

Four teachers explained that having strong faith helped them adapt to a new teaching environment. Their faith gave them courage and motivation to face the challenges at the new workplace. T6 said, *"My God guided me through all the ups and down periods, and I know that there are always blessings behind the challenges…so, I would do things more positively even though people took advantage of me" (assigned more tasks to her because she never complained)*.

Instructional Adaptation

Instructional adaptation entails adjusting and customizing classroom instructions and classroom management approaches based on the teaching contexts in Brunei. For classroom instructions, two sub-themes emerged in terms of teaching methods and learning resources.

The teachers used different teaching methods, such as direct instructions, game-based learning and technology integration to cater for their student learning needs. For example, T9 who used game-based learning explained, *"I used physical games when I taught idioms and phrases…Games could reinforce their memory retention.*" T6 elaborated on her practice of integrating technology in teaching, "*If I write the classical literature on the whiteboard and explain it, students can easily lose their concentration. With the help of the Tab, I can guide the students to interpret the literature line-by-line and write their answers on the Tab during our discussions. I can constantly check and mark their responses.*".

From the aspects of teaching materials, the teachers learned how to design the materials based on the curriculum. For example, T1 said, "*I prepared teaching and learning materials based on the curriculum and paper examination papers (of GCE O Level examination)...I also explored how to design the questions for school-based assessment*".

Since every classroom context is unique, the teachers also adapted their classroom management approach after they became more familiar with their students. T2 shared her experiences on how her approach had changed, "*When I first started to teach, I was a very strict science teacher. I didn't even like having fun with my students…But then, I became more friendly even though I still have some rules and regulations....I also let them have the chance to voice up…*"

Language Adaptation

The medium of instruction in Brunei is English but Malaysian teachers are not native English speakers. In the school where most of the participants were working, the Chinese language is widely spoken. Therefore, the teachers adopted some language adaptation strategies. For example, T4 said, "*During my early career, I was not careful in using English. But as an English teacher, we need to use accurate grammar and precise terms. Some educated parents wondered why I made stupid mistakes. So, I learned to be more careful and think twice when I speak in English.*"

T7 attempted to learn Bruneian language so that she could understand the content presented during academic meetings. She recalled her experiences, "*The first year I was there, I had difficulties in*

understanding what was discussed in the meetings. I need extra explanations. Now, the situation is getting better because I learned Brunei language and the local dialects".

T2 used local slang to build relationships with her students. She explained, "*Students here use "bah" so often. I also use "bah" and "la" to be close to them.*"

***Capital*: Resources Needed for Facilitating Malaysian Teachers' Adaptation Process**

The Malaysian teachers needed *capital* or in our study, the resources that could facilitate their adaptations in Brunei. As shown in Figure 3, two key types of capitals, cultural capital and social capital, emerged from the data.

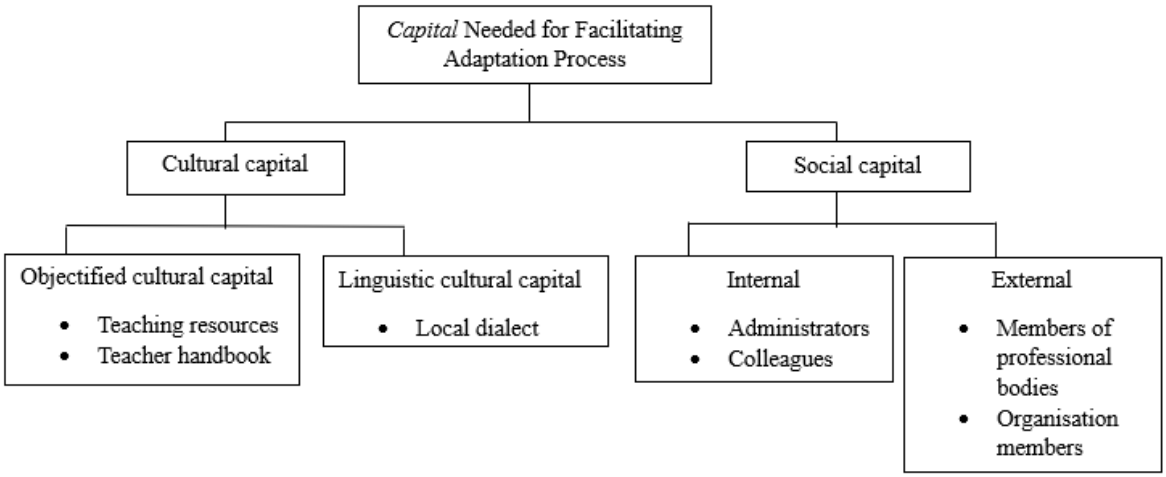

Figure 3. A summary for *capital* for facilitation of adaptation

Cultural Capital

The cultural *capital* comes in two forms, namely objectified cultural capital and linguistic capital. Objectified cultural capital refers to one's tangible property, which includes teaching resources and handbooks for new teachers. Linguistic capital in this study covers mastery of local language.

Objectified cultural capital: Teaching resources

The Malaysian teachers experienced difficulties in obtaining teaching resources such as textbooks/workbooks, teaching softwares and a digital library. T1 felt that *objectified cultural capital,* including teaching resources and departmental handbooks provided by their schools and MoEcould

have helped him and other new teachers adapt quickly. As he explained, "*I believe a good textbook that is based on the latest syllabus will be useful for the teachers…The MoE can release some workbooks or textbooks to help the teachers*."

T9 added, "*If our school has sufficient online teaching resources and various teaching software, these resources will facilitate our teaching. We can integrate technology into our teaching context more smoothly and quickly*." Whilst T4 felt that teaching resources such as a digital library would be a great help for new teachers to have access to past year examination papers and lesson plans done by their predecessors. She said, "*We need to have a system or a digital library for all those previous past papers, all the lesson plans by the previous teachers. New teacher can just refer to these resources*."

Objectified cultural capital: *Handbook for new teachers*

Handbooks that explain the school system and workflow would be helpful for new teachers. T1 further added that, "*Each school must have their own departmental handbook, as this will definitely give new teachers a clearer idea of how to prepare or submit lesson plans, and how to evaluate their students' performances*."

Linguistic cultural capital: Local dialect

Sharing the same dialect with colleagues allowed the Malaysian teachers to develop a positive relationship with them faster. T5 said, "*I can speak in Hakka and Cantonese (both Chinese dialects). I talked to some of my colleagues in Hakka. This helped me build a stronger relationship and (develop) a better understanding of them*."

Social Capital

The social capital consists of human resources that support the teachers throughout their adaptation process. The social capital which could be obtained internally in school includes administrators and colleagues. The social capital from external organisations are members from professional bodies and religious organisations.

Social capital: School administrators

All the Malaysian teachers shared that school-based support initiated by the school administrators would help expatriate teachers adapt faster. T6 explained that the administrators could organise sharing

sessions for expatriate teachers, "*The school should have a session and talk to a new teacher…to talk about the challenges they may face.*"

Through her experience, T6 added, "*...A comprehensive support system including an orientation and a local senior/experienced teacher as a mentor would be helpful for foreign teachers…at least help us with the administration system…When I entered this current school, the semester had started. I had to find out everything myself. The senior teacher can tell us what kind of lessons we should have and an introduction to the syllabus…*"

T8 believed that an orientation is the foundation that supports the transition of new teachers into school settings. As he pointed out: "*Firstly, an orientation is necessary and important for new foreign teachers from my experience. When I first started to teach in Brunei, I had a very detailed orientation. The school has a good orientation that provides a proper introduction which allows new teachers to familiarize the surroundings, resources available, and ask questions on school procedures/policies, emergency contact numbers, who to approach when he/she has questions about the job scope.*"

Social capital: Collegial support from the host country and home country

All the teachers stressed that collegial support from host country and home country, both emotional and work support are the crucial factors that facilitated their adaptation process in Brunei. Collegial support from peers facilitated T5's understanding of context and emotional rebalancing after puzzling experience. She pointed out, "*The Head and my colleagues are my great support. They explain the school policies or how the school system works.. And from time to time, they observe me. They will show me what is the correct way to do a certain thing, or there are things I can't do in this school and in Brunei context.*"

T2 and T6 received emotional support from her Malaysian colleagues. T2 explained, "*They are very helpful…They shared their food, shared their ideas. I shared some emotional problems, difficulties or anything*." Additionally, T6 learned the teaching methods from one of her local senior colleagues. As she shared: "*She guided us to use an Ipad in teaching. She is an innovative person...The first year. I didn't know how to handle the students, how to teach, what activity you can do, especially setting the paper right…*"

Social capital: *Professional body*

T4 added that assistance from a professional body could help enhance new teachers' skills. She provided an example, saying that "*I am also a Microsoft Innovative Educator Expert (MIEE). The Microsoft*

learning community offers many useful courses for teachers. These courses are very good for new teachers."

Social capital: Members from religious organisations

Four teachers who joined the religious organisations shared that the members of those organisations helped them adapt in terms of emotional support and professional guidance. For instance, T6 shared, "*I have members who come from different schools. Sometimes we exchanged our ideas about teaching and did some sharing about the challenges we faced and how to solve them*." T5 added, "*They provided me with emotional support, practical advice and networking opportunities. Their friendship sustained me. Other professionals or teachers in the community offered guidance*…"

DISCUSSION

Using a Bourdieuian theoretical framework, this study investigated issues that revolve around academic mobility when Malaysian teachers teach in Brunei. According to Bordieu, [(habitus) (capital)] + field = practice]. Practice refers to an individual's actions and behaviour, which is a result of one's *habitus* and one's position in a field (*capital*), within the current social arena (*field*) (Ober, 2017). Conceptualizing the differences between teaching in different *fields* (i.e., Malaysia and Brunei), Malaysian teachers' *habitus* adaptation strategies and the *capital* they can utilise to facilitate their adaptations assists our understanding of their *practice* in schools.

The research findings align with Hsieh's (2020) suggestion that the *field* is a dynamic environment with various forms of *capital* and unique ideologies. The *field* in this study – the teaching contexts in Brunei, is rich with different types of capital and distinctive cultures and norms. This study found that this *field* differs from the *field* in Malaysia in terms of educational system, school culture and facilities, despite their vicinity and shared colonization history. Previous studies on the academic mobility from the West to the East and vice versa found that expatriate teachers underwent a lot of challenges in terms of differences in social norms, school culture, language, personal life and collegiality relationship (Hanson, 2003; Martyn, 1988). It is interesting to find out that even Malaysian teachers who moved to Brunei also shared the same experiences. The *field* might determine how much expatriate teachers can feel a sense of belonging or autonomy in an educational environment, in relation to what they experience around them.

Differences in the *field* may result in cultural shock, which is an emotional and psychological reaction brought by immersion in a new culture which is different from one's home culture (Bassett, 2018; Martyn, 1988). The research findings reveal that the different adaptation strategies adopted by those

teachers are closely related to the changes they experienced in the new *field* in the schools in Brunei. When there is a major change in an individual's life (e.g., teaching in another country), he/she creates an understanding of other's cultures, social norms, communication styles, characteristics, behaviors, and at the same time, reflects on their own strengths and weaknesses (Cagmack et al., 2021). By doing so, individuals become more accommodative and flexible in adapting to conditions in the fields. The findings align with Cagmack et al's (2021) suggestions that *habitus* as a practical sense emerging from a person's experience and skills when they are in a field. The Malaysian teachers in this study used various habitus adaptations - intercultural, instructional, psychological and language (Baruah & Gogoi, 2016; Bassett, 2018; Chen, 2016; Hanson, 2003; Martyn, 1988; Wang, 2002; Zhai et al., 2018) in responses to the differences they experienced at the new field.

Developing a good relationship with colleagues is crucial for teachers' adaptability and work engagement (Yang et al., 2019). To better understand school cultures, the teachers consistently communicated with their superiors and colleagues. When there was confusion with schoolwork, they discussed with their colleagues till consensus was achieved. Talking to the local Bruneian colleagues helped the teachers better understand the social norms and cultures in Brunei as well as the students' family background as to avoid unnecessary conflicts. The findings were in line with the study by Bassette (2018), which found expatriate teachers agreed that the workplace community provided a lot of guidance and advice to help them adapt to the school cultures.

The Malaysian teachers adapted their teaching methods and classroom management strategies to suit the teaching contexts and their students' learning needs. In terms of psychological adaptation, developing a positive orientation towards new cultures is essential to living and teaching overseas (Bassette, 2018). The Malaysian teachers took the effort to further understand the local cultures in Brunei and appreciate their uniqueness. While some teachers chose to ignore the negative comments so that they would not be emotionally disturbed, others relied upon religious belief. Language is one of the most important cultural tools (Vygotsky, 1978), and the teachers learnt local language, used common slang to build rapport and communicated with students using precise language to develop a professional identity.

Bourdieu (1986) claims that when certain individuals enter the field of education, they become more aware of the rules of the game. This growing awareness of rules--that is how to navigate schooling systems and institutions—can help these individuals gain *capital* and social position. The teachers perceived that they could utilise social and cultural *capital* available within the school and out of the school better navigate the rules of games in the new education context. Internally, sharing sessions, appointment of a mentor, training on marking scheme, and orientation are potential social *capital* to

facilitate their adaptations in the host country. External resources such as members from professional bodies and organisations also play a role in helping the teachers to adapt in the host country.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that there is an ongoing interplay between *field*, *habitus* and *capital* in terms of academic mobility. The differences between *fields* in Malaysia and Brunei trigger the needs for *habitus* adaptations among Malaysia teachers. Habitus is the result of socialisation with colleagues, parents and friends from the same organisations, as well as embodied experiences gained while teaching in Brunei. *Habitus adaptations* can happen more naturally and smoothly if Malaysian teachers can re-establish their own *capital* or utilise the existing *capitals* in the new *fields* and act according to their position as an expatriate teacher. It can be concluded that the changes that Malaysian teachers encountered in the new teaching environments in Brunei not only contribute to an appreciation of the conditions in the *fields*, but a realisation that adaptation actions are needed for them to continue their teaching career like "fish in the water".

This study has implications on teacher training, teachers planning to teach abroad and school administrators. As academic mobility increases, there is a need for professional training courses to expose student teachers to the concept of multiculturalism and different dimensions of global teachers so that they are prepared for the challenges facing them during their early career in a foreign country (Martyn, 1988). Teachers who are planning to teach abroad may find value in this research. This research provides insights into differences between teaching in different countries as well as some helpful adaptation strategies which they can adopt. Lastly, for school administrators, this study indicates that expatriate teachers need resources such as teaching materials and a mentor so that they can better adapt to the new school environment. Thus, school administrators should provide adequate support to their expatriate teachers to facilitate their adaptation process. Well-adapted expatriate teachers are more likely to be engaged in their work, achieve greater job satisfaction and retain their job (Yang et al., 2019). School administrators can pair veterans with new teachers to lead the new expatriate teachers through the initial period to create a supportive working environment and network for them (Remennick, 2002).

There are a few limitations in terms of methodology in this study. The first limitation is the data collection method, which only involves interviews. There are no other sources which the interview data can be compared with. Since the first and second authors used to teach at the same secondary schools with most of the participants, different data sources can help to prevent bias and confirmation bias, which occurs when the researchers unconsciously generate evidence for an opinion they already hold. For future studies, the researchers can give a questionnaire for the participants to complete to gain some

understanding of the participants' responses before asking deeper questions during the interviews. The second limitation is the small sample size. Eight out of ten participants are teaching in the same school in Brunei. Increasing the number of participants from different schools may enrich the data and provide a more holistic picture of the differences of Malaysian teachers' experience, their adaptations in different school contexts and the type of resources needed.

During the interviews, some interesting themes emerged. For instance, the teachers' ethnicity and their dialects can be a valuable *capital* when they teach in a foreign country, especially in a country with a similar population composition. Future studies can focus on researching how ethnicity and dialects play a role in facilitating Malaysian teachers' adaptations in a foreign country. This study investigated Malaysian teachers' adaptations in Brunei Darussalam using Bordieu's Cultural Capital Theory. Even though the findings revealed how *habitus* was adapted to the teaching context in Brunei, what happened during *hysteresis* and the teachers' adaptation processes during this period of time is worth further investigation. Habitus adaptation happens in a chronological ordering and is dependent on field conditions (Cakmak et al., 2021). Future studies can build on the Theory of Multicultural Adaptation to explore the entire dynamic adaptation process by Malaysian teachers, upon relocating to new, unfamiliar environments, establish (or re-establish) stable and functional relationships with those new environments.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by the Faculty of Social Sciences and Leisure Management Seed Funding, Taylor's University [FSLM-SEED/1/2022/SOD/001]. Ethics approval was obtained from the Taylor's University Human Ethics Committee [HEC 2022/321] prior to the implementation of this research.

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