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Innovating cultural studies pedagogy: a reflective case study of active and experiential learning in higher education

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This paper presents a reflective case study of a pedagogical innovation in teaching the Introduction to Southeast Asian Cultures and Societies Unit in a higher education institution. Moving beyond traditional classroom delivery, this study analyses the practice of active and experiential learning approaches used in learning a cultural Unit. Adopting a reflective case study methodology, this study examines the application of active learning and experiential learning strategies in teaching cultural studies. It includes the development of the active learning progress model in teaching the Unit, which encompasses active and experiential learning activities aimed at enhancing student engagement in constructing knowledge and developing cultural competencies. Drawing on the analysis of the curriculum development, lecturers' reflections and student evaluation in the University's Wide Student Evaluation of Teaching and Units (SETU) survey, the study explores how active and experiential learning practices shape learning and teaching in cultural studies. The findings suggest that active and experiential learning strategies could significantly enrich students' engagement, cultural competencies and foster critical awareness of cultural diversity. The study contributes to scholarship on cultural studies pedagogy by demonstrating how immersive approaches can transform learning and teaching in higher education. Future research could incorporate a deeper exploration of students' perspectives to evaluate the impact and transferability of this innovation.

KEYWORDS

active learning, cultural studies, experiential learning, higher education pedagogy, reflective teaching

1 Introduction

Teaching cultures and societies in higher education presents both opportunities and challenges, particularly in culturally diverse regions such as Southeast Asia. Cultural studies pedagogical approaches often remain rooted in traditional lecture-based delivery which limits students' ability to critically engage with lived cultural realities. This issue is especially pressing in Southeast Asia cultural studies, where histories of colonialism, cultural practices and religious diversity create dynamic cultural landscapes that require concrete experiences to develop nuanced understanding. In this context, teaching cultures in higher education is not merely an academic exercise but also an encounter with histories, identities, cultural experiences, and beliefs that coexist in a society. Within such diversity, the classroom itself becomes a space where students bring their theoretical knowledge, experiences, assumptions and perspectives into dialogue.

However, there has been growing recognition that active and experiential learning offers a valuable framework to enhance learning experiences. Experiential learning situates knowledge in practice, enabling students to explore culture not merely as theoretical knowledge but as lived experience that can be observed, questioned, and reflected upon (Kolb, 1984; Bonwell and Eison, 1991). In cultural studies, this pedagogical shift encourages students to question their own assumptions, engage critically with diverse perspectives, experience and cultivate their intercultural competence skills (Freeman et al., 2014).

Therefore, this reflective case study examines the application of active learning and experiential learning strategies in teaching cultural studies, aiming to enhance student engagement in knowledge construction and the development of cultural competencies. The study addresses two key questions: (1) How do active and experiential learning approaches influence the teaching and learning of cultural studies in higher education? and (2) How can the cultural studies curriculum be innovated to promote deeper intercultural knowledge and competence in higher education? This research contends that active and experiential learning strategies strengthen student engagement and knowledge development, offering important implications for cultural studies pedagogy in Southeast Asia and beyond.

2 Literature review

2.1 Active learning in higher education

Active learning has long been recognised as a transformative pedagogical approach that deepens student engagement, motivation, and critical inquiry in higher education (Bonwell and Eison, 1991; Prince, 2004). Rather than treating students as passive recipients of information, it invites them into a participatory space of learning that is shaped by active participation, collaboration, reflection, and applied problem-solving. Studies have consistently shown its capacity to enrich understanding, enhance knowledge retention, and nurture transferable competencies that extend beyond disciplinary boundaries (Freeman et al., 2014; Prince, 2004).

In many higher education contexts, active learning has been shown to be transformative in classrooms traditionally shaped by teacher-centred or exam-oriented practices. Kember (2000) observed that transitioning from didactic to student-centered pedagogies often requires overcoming the expectations of traditional learning but ultimately results in higher levels of motivation and cognitive engagement. Similarly, research across diverse global settings has demonstrated that methods such as peer teaching, reflective dialogue, case-based learning, and project-based assessments cultivate greater learner autonomy and collaborative problem-solving (Michael, 2006; Ruiz-Primo et al., 2011).

More recent scholarship highlights that effective active learning also depends on intentional curriculum design and supportive learning environments. Studies emphasise that strategies like micro-teaching, structured peer reflection, and field-based experiential tasks can significantly enhance communication skills, teamwork, and higher-order thinking (Awang-Hashim et al., 2023; Foo and Foo, 2022). When implemented systematically, these approaches shift the role of the lecturer from content transmitter to learning facilitator, thereby cultivating spaces for inquiry, participation, and critical engagement.

Despite its widely documented benefits, active learning continues to face some challenges globally. The persistence of large lecture formats, rigid curricula, and assessment systems that prioritise memorisation over critical engagement can hinder meaningful adoption (Kember, 2000; Meganathan, 2024). To fully realise the potential of active learning, institutions must invest in faculty development, redesign assessment strategies, and encourage pedagogical innovation that centres the learner's active construction of knowledge.

2.2 Experiential learning in cultural studies pedagogy

One of the promising active learning strategies is experiential learning. Experiential learning has increasingly been recognised as a transformative mode of education, particularly in disciplines that emphasise immersion, reflection, and real-world engagement. Grounded in the idea that knowledge emerges through doing, reflecting, and applying, it reframes learning as an active process rather than a passive transfer of information (Dewey, 2024; Kolb, 1984). By situating learning within authentic contexts, experiential approaches bridge theory and practice, allowing students to translate abstract ideas into lived understanding and application. This process not only deepens critical and reflective thinking but also nurtures students' intercultural awareness and transferable skills.

Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) underpins this approach through four interconnected stages, comprising concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. The cyclical movement between experience and reflection encourages learners to internalise insights and re-apply them meaningfully in new situations. Within cultural studies, experiential learning takes on particular resonance because culture itself is lived, dynamic, and relational. As Healey and Jenkins (2000) observe, experiential pedagogies are especially effective in fields that rely on embodied engagement, such as geography and cultural studies. Immersive activities, such as film analysis, fieldwork, or creative workshops, allow students to connect theoretical frameworks with lived experience, cultivating reflexivity and intercultural competence (Healey and Jenkins, 2000; Kuh, 2008). Empirical studies further affirm the value of this approach in fostering engagement and transferable skills across disciplines. Collectively, such findings underscore the adaptability and continuing relevance of experiential frameworks in transforming pedagogy and enhancing learning experiences.

In the context of this study, Kolb's model is not treated as a rigid framework or a set of learning cycles but rather as dynamic dimensions that underpin the development and implementation of experiential learning.

3 Methodology

This study adopts a reflective case study approach. The data primarily derive from curriculum development that integrates active and experiential learning strategies, as well as from learning and teaching experiences in the Introduction to Southeast Asian Cultures and Societies Unit. This reflective case study was developed based on two semesters of the Unit's delivery. The Unit was offered during the Summer and Winter short semesters of 2025 and was attended by a total of 47 students.

The case study situates researcher roles and positionality through a reflective practice inquiry approach, drawing its core dataset from the lecturer's curriculum design, implementation activities, and reflective narratives. As such, this study is grounded in a reflective teaching practice, where the researchers were also the lecturers responsible for the design and delivery of the Introduction to Southeast Asian Cultures and Societies Unit. It is important to note that reflection was integral to the research process, involving continuous reflection on learning and teaching experiences, as well as student engagement in learning the Unit. Lecturers' reflections and experiences were analyzed to address the research question of how the cultural studies curriculum can be innovated to foster deeper intercultural knowledge and competence in higher education.

The researchers analyzed responses from the University-wide Student Evaluation of Teaching and Units (SETU) survey, which captured quantitative ratings and open-ended qualitative feedback. The survey's institution-wide design reduced potential bias associated with relying solely on lecturers' perspectives. The University administered the evaluation online through the University's official platform. The study used these data as a secondary, contextual source to complement and situate lecturers' reflections, not as part of a formal data-triangulation framework. The researchers did not collect new student data or recruit students as research participants. The manuscript references institutional evaluation data that the university generated independently of this research, and the team accessed it only in secondary, aggregated, anonymised form. The dataset contained no identifiable information, and the researchers had no access to individual-level student identifications.

4 Findings

4.1 The curriculum Southeast Asia Cultures and Societies Unit

The Southeast Asian Cultures and Societies unit is an elective offered to Monash University Malaysia students. The University's educational framework emphasises the use of active and immersive learning approaches. To support this, extensive resources including learning and teaching facilities, and professional development training are made available for academic staff in enhancing their active and immersive learning strategies beyond conventional teaching methods.

Students enrolled in the Unit represented a wide geographic spread, with some originating from Southeast Asian countries and others from regions beyond. This diversity encompassing local and international students with varied nationalities, cultural backgrounds and various fields of studies introduced additional complexity to learning about Southeast Asian cultures. At the same time, it enriched the learning

environment by fostering cross-cultural interaction and enhancing knowledge sharing among students from different backgrounds.

In this paper, the term 'Unit' refers to a credit-bearing course/module offered by the institution, comprising scheduled contact hours, assessments, and student workload. This Unit is designed to equip students with the knowledge, skills, and cultural competencies to critically engage with the historical, political, cultural, and contemporary complexities of Southeast Asian societies. The Unit begins by discussing the region within its geographical and historical foundations, emphasizing the formation of diverse identities shaped by ethnic groups and cultural landscapes. Then it examines major religious traditions and their influence on cultural plurality, followed by an exploration of social structures, traditional practices, and cultural expressions across the region. In its final stage, the unit focuses on a critical analysis of contemporary challenges, encouraging students to consider the dynamic intersections of history, politics, and culture.

In terms of learning outcomes, by the end of the unit, students are expected to explain the historical, political, and cultural dimensions of Southeast Asian societies, analyze and evaluate contemporary issues through theoretical and critical frameworks that reflect historical, political, and social contexts, and demonstrate intercultural communication skills through active engagement with the cultural and religious dynamics of Southeast Asia.

Based on the Unit content and the learning outcomes, the pedagogical design was intentionally structured to move beyond traditional lecture delivery, embedding active and experiential learning strategies as a core feature of the unit rather than supplementary activities. Each activity was carefully developed to constructively align with the learning outcomes and actively engage students in knowledge construction and developing their cultural competencies.

This Unit took a learning progress approach, moving step by step from building basic knowledge to applying ideas in practice, and then to more immersive and reflective activities. The figure below illustrates the learning activities progression adopted in the learning and teaching the Unit (Figure 1).

The Unit adopts a structured learning progression model that moves from foundational knowledge-building to immersive cultural engagement. Each stage specifically aligns with the Unit's learning outcomes with active and experiential learning experiences components to ensure that students are supported in moving from theory to practice, and from observation to critical reflection for new knowledge creation.

5 Discussion

This section discusses how active and experiential learning practices shape the learning and teaching of the Unit. The discussion is organised around key pedagogical components: cultural ice-breaking and food experiences, workshops and film reflections, interactive



FIGURE 1

Model of active and experiential learning for the introduction to Southeast Asian cultures and societies unit.

online content, and the field trip. Together, these components illustrate how experiential engagement, active learning, and reflective analysis are interwoven throughout the Unit's design.

5.1 Active learning sessions

The learning journey began with introductory ice-breaking activities and a "Taste of Southeast Asia" food experience. The lecturer started with interaction with students in face-to-face conversation and integrated interactive quiz using Slido, for example a quiz entitled "*Quick Questions on Southeast Asian Cultures and Societies*." This activity facilitated a conversation on Southeast Asian societies and served as an engaging way to introduce students to the region's cultural diversity.

The ice-breaking activity and Southeast Asian food experience set the tone for intercultural engagement by allowing students to share and explore cultural experiences in a safe learning space. It introduced students to the diversity of Southeast Asian cultures through concrete experiences and informal dialogue, fostering curiosity and openness. In the first class, the ice-breaking session was designed to foster interpersonal connection and cultural curiosity among students. Central to this activity was the Southeast Asian food experience, where students were invited to taste a variety of traditional delicacies from Southeast Asian countries. The food was presented in a communal setting, encouraging students to engage in informal conversations while eating. For instance, during these exchanges, some engaged in discussions about the origins, ingredients, and cultural significance of the food they are eating. Many shared their own cultural backgrounds and food traditions and personal stories, transforming the activity into a space of intercultural dialogue. Such interactional experiences provide students with sensory engagement through concrete experience with food culture. The concrete experience of engaging in the activity built a foundation of mutual respect and created safe space for more immersive learning experiences in the later learning stages.

Following the "Taste of Southeast Asia" food experience session, students shared their personal experiences with Southeast Asian cuisine and engaged in peer discussions about the region's diverse cultures. Building on this experiential learning, the lecturer facilitated a short group activity titled "Cultural Variety of Southeast Asia." In this activity, students were asked to introduce one unique aspect of Southeast Asian culture to someone from another part of the world, explaining their choice and its significance. Each group brainstormed and selected a single significant unique aspect to focus on such as historical landmarks, festival, cultural and traditions, discussing why it was distinctive and how it reflects the historical, social, or cultural context of the region. To support their presentations, groups used visual aids and delivered a concise short explanation of their chosen aspect.

This active learning exercise revealed numerous significant historical, cultural, political, and social dimensions of Southeast Asian countries. Additionally, the activity served as an icebreaker, fostering greater student engagement and participation in subsequent immersive and interactive learning sessions.

5.2 Interactive online content

Following the first stage of the cultural experiences, students then engaged with interactive online modules delivered through a SCORM-packaged digital learning resource. The modules introduced key theoretical concepts such as cultural identity, colonial history, and religious

diversity, forming the conceptual foundation that anchored subsequent discussions and analyses.

The scenario-based design enabled learners to explore branching case studies, multimedia materials, and reflective prompts that linked abstract theory with lived examples. The modules' interactive features include videos, short quizzes, and feedback loops that help consolidate knowledge while catering to diverse learners and cultural backgrounds. Pedagogically, this virtual space not only reinforced cognitive understanding but also prepared students for the subsequent immersive learning activities such as workshops, film reflection, and field-based learning.

5.3 Workshops and film reflection

In the subsequent stage of the learning process, students transitioned into structured learning through three workshop-based activities to deepen their understanding of Southeast Asian societies through collaborative inquiry and reflection. Students worked in assigned groups, with each group representing a specific Southeast Asian country. This structure enabled them to build knowledge progressively, as each workshop required them to revisit and extend their understanding of the socio-political and cultural issues and challenges in the same national context. The first two workshop sessions required them to conduct research, interpret data, and analyse their findings in their group. They presented their findings and answered the questions that arise in the workshops.

In the first workshop, students worked in assigned groups representing a specific Southeast Asian country. They were required to situate their country within its geographical, historical, and demographic contexts before identifying one social, political, or economic challenge for focused analysis. Students defined the scope of the issue, examined how historical legacies, cultural diversity, and identity formation shaped the challenge, and proposed an initial response that was grounded in the local context. Group presentations were followed by discussion and questions, during which students clarified their interpretations and drew on their intercultural backgrounds and experiences to offer comparative perspectives.

Building on this foundation, the second workshop required students to delve into a deeper analysis by focusing on religious and cultural diversity within the context of the same selected country. Working in their groups, students highlighted their selected challenge and examined how belief systems, syncretic practices, and cultural traditions influenced everyday life and social values. They were required to refine their proposed response by considering cultural sensitivities, ethical implications, and the broader social context. The presentation and discussion sessions encouraged students to reflect on the feasibility of their responses and to engage critically with alternative viewpoints raised by their peers. The opportunity for participating in the in-class discussions encouraged students to clarify their arguments on how belief systems, syncretic practices, and indigenous traditions shape everyday life and affect the social values and challenges in each selected Southeast Asian community. At the end of their presentation, students proposed contextually grounded viewpoints on social change. What stood out in the group presentation was also the inclusion of visual content to further support the details that were showcased. The question-and-answer sessions held after each presentation focused on cultural sensitivity, ethical considerations, and the feasibility of proposed solutions.

The students then went through a hands-on *Tanjak* (Malay cultural headgear) workshop facilitated by an invited *Tanjak* expert. Students learned about the history and cultural narratives of the Malay heritage and immersed in the experience of folding the *tanjak*, linking the craftsmanship to deeper reflections on identity, hierarchy, and continuity in Malay and Southeast Asian traditions. For many students, particularly those from outside the region, this encounter provided a tangible entry point into understanding Malay cultural practices through embodied engagement with Malay material culture.

The Southeast Asian film workshop offered a film-based learning component that culminated in a film screening and an individual reflective film assessment that required students to consider how films function as representations of socio-cultural and political realities. In the Southeast Asian film workshop, students firstly learned about and engaged with selected Southeast Asian films as cultural texts that reflect history, social tensions, and evolving identities in the region. Guided by interactive class activities and discussion, students analysed cinematic representations of socio-cultural issues such as identity, inequality, memory, and political struggle, drawing on concepts introduced in the lecture and interactive film discussions. The reflective writing assessment required students to combine textual analysis with personal reflections on the film that they have watched in class. In the immersive film learning experience, students connected theoretical perspectives to the narrative and visual dimensions of Southeast Asian cinema while reflecting on the affective dimension in terms of drawing on similar experiences from their own cultural backgrounds and lived experiences. Across this and the earlier workshops, students experienced learning through dialogue, collaboration, and reflection, which supported the development of cultural empathy and awareness, critical understanding, and intercultural sensitivity.

5.4 Field trip

The learning process of the Unit was extended through an immersive field trip designed to support active and experiential learning. The field trip was conducted at selected cultural, religious, and historical sites in Kuala Lumpur and aimed to translate conceptual discussions from earlier workshops into direct engagement with lived cultural contexts. Through on-site observation, students were invited to consider how Southeast Asian cultures and religious practices are embedded in everyday spaces and shaped by historical, social, and contemporary influences.

During the visits, students observed architectural features, religious rituals, cultural artefacts, and social practices at sites such as the Malaysian National Mosque, Siamese Buddhist temple, Islamic Art Museum, and a local art and cultural market. Architectural elements, in particular, provided a concrete point of entry for reflection, allowing students to examine how belief systems, cultural values, and historical influences are expressed through spatial design, material forms, and decorative motifs. These observations encouraged students to reflect on the intersections between history, modernisation, globalisation, and local cultural practices.

The field trip was deliberately structured to promote active participation and collaborative learning. Students remained in their assigned groups throughout the visit, enabling shared observation, discussion, and informal dialogue during site visits and travel between locations. These interactions supported students in clarifying their interpretations, comparing perspectives, and connecting their observations to concepts introduced earlier in the Unit. For students

unfamiliar with certain cultural or religious settings, collective engagement with architectural spaces and everyday practices offered an accessible way to develop cultural understanding.

Students were required to collaboratively document their field experiences and reflect on guiding questions related to observed cultural elements, ethical considerations, and the influence of historical and global forces on local practices. As part of the unit assessment, students submitted a group-based video for which they were encouraged to integrate visual documentation with reflective commentary, supporting the articulation of shared insights and collective meaning-making from their field trip experience.

As such, the field trip contributed to the development of intercultural awareness, ethical sensitivity, and communication skills. During the field trip, students demonstrated increased attentiveness to appropriate conduct in cultural and religious spaces and greater confidence in engaging with unfamiliar social environments. Overall, the field trip functioned to combine conceptual learning and lived experience, reinforcing the role of active engagement and reflective assessment within cultural studies pedagogy.

5.5 Students' perspectives

The overall student evaluation score in the Student Evaluation of Teaching and Units (SETU) survey was 4.8 out of 5, which fell into the *Outstanding* band. This demonstrates that innovative pedagogical practices play a central role in shaping learning experiences in cultural studies. In addition to learning and teaching pedagogy and strategies, the motivation and enthusiasm of the lecturer are equally important. In the qualitative report, a student highlighted the lecturers' genuine enthusiasm motivated them to engage more deeply with the material and inspired knowledge exploration beyond classroom discussions.

The genuine enthusiasm and passion displayed by the lecturers truly motivated me to engage more deeply with the material. Their energy made the content more captivating and inspired me to expand my knowledge beyond the classroom discussions.

Workshops were repeatedly identified as impactful, for example one student described the presentation and '*tanjak*' (traditional headgear) workshop as an immersive experience that sparked their interest in learning about cultural traditions. The student commented:

The presentation and *tanjak* workshop create an immersive experience for me to be curious about the culture I'm going to learn about.

These findings suggest that integrating active and experiential learning approaches not only enhances student motivation but also fosters immersive engagement in cultural studies. Dewey (2024) asserted that individuals come to understand themselves and the world through interaction and experience, emphasizing that education should cultivate environments conducive to such engagement, grounded in the principles of continuity and interaction. Building on this theoretical foundation, students in the Unit were provided with a supportive and safe space to interact, voice out their thoughts and share cultural experiences. This pedagogical strategy was deliberately designed, as prior research (Bonwell and Eison, 1991) indicates that students who actively participate in the learning process construct knowledge more effectively than those who passively receive it. The lecturers noticed that a

combination of active-learning activities, collaborative projects, and experiential tasks generated enthusiasm and immersive learning experiences. Overall, the structured and intentional learning design of this Unit enabled students to take an active role in constructing knowledge and to enhance their cultural competencies.

5.6 Lecturers' reflections

From the lecturers' perspective, the active and experiential learning strategies require detailed planning and structuring a clear learning flow. The Unit was intentionally designed to progress from introductory activities, such as cultural ice-breaking sessions over Southeast Asian food experiences, to more advanced tasks like producing a reflective film report and reflective video following a field trip. This scaffolded approach aligns with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle, which emphasizes movement from concrete experience to reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. By sequencing activities in this way, students can gradually build confidence, apply knowledge in authentic contexts, and engage in deeper knowledge construction.

Another important observation relates to the role of lecturers in facilitating active learning. Rather than serving solely as transmitters of knowledge, lecturers acted as facilitators for student-centered learning. Active learning theory highlights that students benefit most when they are actively involved in constructing their understanding (Bonwell and Eison, 1991). In teaching this cultural Unit, this was achieved through carefully designed discussions, workshops, film screening and interactive presentations, where lecturers guided students toward independent exploration while maintaining consistency across the Unit.

The use of active learning also highlighted the need for clarity in both instructions and assessment. Because the Unit incorporated a variety of active and experiential learning activities, students required clear guidance to understand expectations and learning outcomes for each learning activity. Rubrics played a vital role in making assessment transparent and equitable, ensuring that students were able to monitor their progress and reflect on their performance. This practice not only reinforced accountability but also supported students in navigating more complex tasks with confidence.

Inclusivity emerged as another significant consideration in the developing and implementing active and experiential learning Unit. Considering students coming from diverse cultural and academic backgrounds, lecturers recognized the importance of fostering an inclusive environment where all learners could participate meaningfully. The inclusive process should be intentional and planned well. For example, in the beginning of the semester, the lecturers send a first week of the semester survey to understand if there is anything that students like to share so the lecturers would better support their learning. The first week semester survey included providing varied entry points into activities, encouraging diverse perspectives, and adapting support to meet individual needs. In addition, lecturers design course content to recognise diversity. Such practices resonate with a broader pedagogical aim for inclusivity in higher education, ensuring that no student is disadvantaged in the process of active and experiential learning.

Finally, technology played a pivotal role in sustaining communication and learning engagement. The Learning Management System (LMS) in Moodle provided active functions such as discussion forums, interactive modules, learning resources that facilitated collaboration, feedback, and reflective learning between students and lecturers. When paired with experiential and inclusive approaches, technology contributed to a dynamic and accessible learning environment, reinforcing the

overall effectiveness of the Unit's design. However, this form of innovation requires institutional support in terms of resources, time, and flexibility in curriculum design. It also requires willingness from both educators and students to engage with less traditional forms of learning.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

This reflective case study highlights how pedagogical innovation integrating experiential and active learning can transform the teaching of cultural studies in higher education. Learning elements such as concrete experiences, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation through food experiences, film reviews, academic presentations, hands-on workshops, field explorations, and the production of reflective videos have enriched students' engagement and deepened their understanding of cultural complexity. However, it is important to note that the development of active and experiential learning activities and assessments requires thorough and systematic planning, ongoing reflection, and an institutionally supportive environment. This process also signifies a mindset shift from traditional, content-centered learning toward more participatory and reflective approaches.

The study contributes to the broader framework of curriculum development and offers a practical model for embedding active and experiential learning into the teaching of cultural studies. Although grounded in cultural studies, the findings of the reflective study attempt to show the broader applicability of the pedagogical design and learning strategies developed, suggesting their relevance across humanities, social sciences, and interdisciplinary contexts concerned with critical thinking, reflexivity, and engagement with real-world issues. It is also worth noting that the findings are primarily based on the lecturers' perspectives and reflections, supported by outputs from student feedback surveys. While these sources provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of pedagogical innovation, they do not fully capture the depth of students' voices, suggesting the need for further investigation into students' experiences.

Based on the findings of this reflective case study, it is recommended that higher education institutions provide structured support in curriculum design, learning and teaching resources and quality assurance processes, including professional development and curriculum planning resources. Educators should be encouraged to adopt flexible pedagogical approaches that integrate experiential activities with reflective assessment to enhance student engagement and meaningful learning experiences.

Future research could prioritise the inclusion of students' voices through qualitative and mixed-methods approaches, such as interviews, focus groups, and longitudinal designs. Capturing students' learning experiences will provide deeper insight into how experiential learning shapes intercultural competence, reflexivity, and engagement across diverse disciplinary and cultural contexts.

Data availability statement

The data will be made available by the authors upon reasonable request.

Author contributions

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