

Assessing the Impact of the SEA Teacher Program on Pre-Service Teachers' Pedagogical Skills and Intercultural Competence

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ABSTRACT

The SEA Teacher Program aims to enhance pre-service teachers' pedagogical skills and cross-cultural understanding by providing international teaching experiences in ASEAN countries. This study examines the program's impact on participants' teaching strategies, classroom management, and professional development, addressing a gap in research on the long-term effects of such programs. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and personal reflections from 30 participants. Thematic analysis revealed significant improvements in participants' confidence, adaptability, and use of interactive teaching methods. Classroom engagement and student motivation increased as participants implemented student-centered learning strategies. Additionally, participants developed stronger communication and intercultural skills, enabling them to navigate diverse educational settings effectively. These findings highlight the program's success in preparing future educators for global teaching environments. However, challenges such as cultural adaptation and limited program duration were noted, suggesting areas for improvement. The study concludes with practical recommendations, such as extending the program duration, incorporating more intercultural training, and fostering partnerships with schools in diverse regions. Future research should explore the long-term impact of the program on participants' teaching careers and compare outcomes across different ASEAN countries to further enhance international education collaboration.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Education is one of the most important aspects in the development of a nation [1]. Every country strives to improve the quality of education in order to produce superior human resources. In the era of globalization, education must also be able to adapt to the times and open up opportunities for cooperation between countries [2]. Therefore, innovation in learning methods, utilization of technology, and adaptive curriculum are important factors in creating a relevant and competitive education system at the global level.

One of the main challenges in the world of education is how to create effective teaching methods that are in accordance with student needs [3]. The methods applied in one country may not be suitable for application in another country. Therefore, the exchange of teaching experiences is very important [4], [5]. In addition, the development of a flexible curriculum based on local characteristics and the application of technology in learning can help improve the effectiveness of education and adapt it to the needs of the times.

The SEA Teacher program is here as a solution to broaden the horizons of prospective educators about the education system in ASEAN countries [6]. This program aims to provide teaching experience for prospective teacher students abroad. Thus, participants can compare and adopt best practices in the world of education. In addition,

interaction with different cultures and learning environments helps improve pedagogical skills, openness to innovation, and adaptability in facing challenges in the global education world.

The SEA Teacher program also encourages participants to improve their communication and adaptation skills in different environments. In addition to teaching, participants also interact directly with students and educators in the destination country. This allows them to understand the various challenges faced in different education systems. With this experience, participants not only gain academic insight, but also enrich their cultural perspectives and develop leadership and collaboration skills that can be applied in their future careers as educators.

The education curriculum in each country has its own characteristics. The Philippines, for example, implements a K-12 system that is different from the education system in Indonesia. Therefore, SEA Teacher participants need to adapt to the education policies in force in the destination country. This adaptation process not only includes understanding the curriculum, but also teaching methods, student learning culture, and the evaluation system applied. Thus, participants can develop flexibility in teaching and adopt more effective learning strategies according to the needs of students in various educational contexts.

In addition to differences in curriculum, cultural differences are also challenges faced by SEA Teacher program participants. The way of communicating, ethics in teaching, and students' learning habits can be very different from those in Indonesia. Program participants must be able to adapt so that the learning process runs smoothly. Understanding social norms and values adopted in the destination country is key to building good relationships with students and local educators. With good intercultural skills, participants can create an inclusive learning environment and support the exchange of knowledge more effectively. Teaching experience in an international environment is very valuable for prospective teachers. They can learn about innovative teaching approaches and strategies for overcoming various challenges in the classroom [7]. Thus, they will become more professional and competent educators in the future [8]. In addition, interaction with various education systems helps them develop a more open mindset, improve critical thinking skills, and enrich learning methods that can be applied in their home countries. This not only has an impact on improving the quality of individual teaching, but also contributes to the advancement of education more broadly.

Various studies have shown that teaching experience abroad can improve teachers' pedagogical skills and problem-solving abilities [9]. In addition, interaction with students from different cultures can enrich the perspectives of prospective educators [10]. Therefore, exchange programs such as SEA Teacher are very important in the world of modern education. With this experience, prospective teachers can develop adaptation skills, creativity in teaching, and a deeper understanding of diversity in education. This not only has an impact on their professional development, but also contributes to improving the quality of learning that is more inclusive and innovative.

Effective learning methods do not only depend on the curriculum used, but also on how teachers deliver the material [11], [12]. In the SEA Teacher program, participants are given the freedom to explore various learning strategies. This gives them the opportunity to develop methods that best suit the characteristics of students in the destination country. By trying various approaches, such as project-based learning, interactive discussions, or the use of technology in the classroom, participants can find the most effective strategies in improving student understanding and engagement. This experience not only enriches their teaching skills, but also prepares them to become innovative and adaptive educators in various learning situations.

In addition to academic learning, SEA Teacher also aims to improve participants' interpersonal skills. They learn how to work in teams, collaborate with local teachers, and communicate with students from different backgrounds. This is a valuable experience that will be useful in their careers as educators [13], [14]. The ability to adapt in a multicultural environment and understand the dynamics of cross-cultural collaboration helps participants develop leadership skills, empathy, and effective communication. With this provision, they can become educators who are not only academically competent, but also able to build positive relationships with students and colleagues in various educational contexts.

The main challenge faced by teachers is how to deal with differences in student learning systems and habits [15]. Some students may be accustomed to certain learning methods, so they require a different approach. Therefore, flexibility and creativity in teaching are very necessary skills [16]. Teachers must be able to adjust teaching strategies to suit students' needs, either through the use of interactive learning media, variations in teaching methods, or a more personal approach. With this ability, teachers can create an inclusive, interesting, and effective learning environment, so that students can more easily understand the material and are motivated to learn.

The SEA Teacher program is also a place to introduce each participant's culture to students in the destination country. With this cultural exchange, participants and students can understand and appreciate the differences that exist [17]. This creates a more inclusive and harmonious learning environment. In addition, this cross-cultural interaction also helps build tolerance, openness, and mutual respect among participants and students. By understanding the various values and traditions of each country, they can broaden their horizons and foster a global attitude that values diversity in the world of education. In the world of education, communication skills are an important factor in the success of the teaching and learning process [18]. SEA Teacher participants must be able to convey material clearly even when facing language barriers. This ability will be very useful in improving the quality of interaction between teachers and students. In addition, they also need to develop effective communication strategies, such as the use of body language, visuals, or activity-based learning methods, so that messages can be conveyed properly. With strong

communication skills, teachers can build better relationships with students, improve their understanding, and create a more interactive and enjoyable learning environment.

In addition to academic and cultural aspects, the program also helps participants build professional networks. They can meet educators from various backgrounds and share experiences. This opens up opportunities for future collaboration in the field of education [19]. Through interactions with teachers, lecturers, and fellow participants from various countries, they can broaden their horizons about the global education system and develop innovative ideas in teaching. This network also has the potential to be a source of collaboration in research, curriculum development, or other exchange programs that can improve the quality of education in each country.

Teaching activities in SEA Teacher do not only focus on delivering material, but also on developing student character. Teachers are not only tasked with teaching knowledge, but also helping students in forming positive attitudes and values [20]. Therefore, program participants must be able to be role models for students. By demonstrating discipline, responsibility, and respect, teachers can inspire students to develop good character. In addition, through daily interactions, participants can also instill values such as cooperation, tolerance, and curiosity, which will be beneficial for students' personal and academic development in the future.

One of the great benefits of this program is that it provides participants with the opportunity to develop more innovative approaches to learning. With the experience of teaching abroad, participants can bring new ideas into the education system in their home country [21]. This can contribute to improving the overall quality of education. This character formation does not only occur in the classroom, but also through various extracurricular activities and other social interactions. Thus, the SEA Teacher program not only contributes to improving the quality of education, but also in forming a young generation with integrity, empathy, and a high enthusiasm for learning.

This program also provides participants with the opportunity to improve their reflective skills. They can evaluate the teaching methods they have used and find ways to improve them. Thus, participants will continue to develop into better educators [22]. This reflection process allows them to identify strengths and weaknesses in their teaching approaches, and adjust strategies to be more effective in the future. In addition, by receiving feedback from mentors and peers, participants can enrich their perspectives on the world of education, so that they are better prepared to face various challenges in the classroom and create a more meaningful learning experience for students.

The success of the SEA Teacher program depends not only on the participants, but also on the support from their home educational institutions. Universities that send students to this program need to provide adequate guidance before and during the program. This will help participants face the challenges that exist. With thorough preparation, such as pedagogical training, introduction to the culture of the destination country, and adaptation strategies in a new environment, participants can be better prepared to carry out teaching duties. In addition, ongoing support in the form of mentoring and periodic evaluations can also help them overcome obstacles and optimize their learning experience during the program.

By participating in SEA Teacher, participants can gain first-hand experience of different classroom dynamics. They will learn how to manage heterogeneous classes and understand the diverse learning needs of students. This is a very important skill in the increasingly complex world of education. In addition, this program also provides an opportunity for participants to learn about various evaluation methods used in other countries. Different assessment systems provide new insights into how to assess student progress more effectively. This can be an inspiration in improving the evaluation system in the participant's home country.

In an increasingly connected world, having international experience is an added value for an educator [23]. By understanding the global perspective in education, they can provide more relevant and engaging learning for their students [24]. This also helps them in facing future educational challenges.

In terms of professionalism, SEA Teacher participants gain valuable experience in dealing with various situations in the classroom. They learn how to adjust teaching methods to existing conditions, as well as develop strategies to increase student engagement in the learning process. By participating in the SEA Teacher program, participants not only gain academic experience but also broaden their social and cultural insights. They learn how to work in a multicultural environment and understand the importance of diversity in education [25]. This makes them more open and innovative educators. Overall, the SEA Teacher program provides enormous benefits for participants, both in terms of academics and self-development. With the various challenges and experiences faced, participants become better prepared to face the ever-evolving world of education. This program is a valuable investment in producing prospective educators who are qualified and have a global perspective.

2. METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through direct observation, interviews with teachers and students, and personal reflections from program participants. This method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences during the SEA Teacher program. This approach is suitable for understanding social phenomena and interactions that occur during the program, including challenges, adaptation strategies, and the impact of the program on participants and the learning environment [26].

The study began with a preparation stage that included program orientation, selecting a target school, and preparing a learning plan. Orientation was conducted online and offline to provide participants with information about

culture, education systems, and the tasks they would undertake during the program. In addition, participants were also given training related to teaching strategies, adaptation in a new environment, and effective communication techniques [27]. With thorough preparation, it is hoped that participants can carry out their roles as prospective educators with more confidence and professionalism in target schools [28].

After the orientation stage, participants entered the observation stage, where they observed the teaching methods applied in target schools, interaction patterns between teachers and students, and the dynamics of the learning environment as a whole. These observations provide in-depth insights into the pedagogical approaches used, student characteristics, and challenges that may be faced in the learning process [29]. The data obtained from this stage becomes the basis for participants in developing effective learning strategies, so that they can adjust teaching methods to the needs and context of the school where they work [30]. The next stage is learning planning. Participants prepare a learning implementation plan (RPP) that is adjusted to the curriculum at the target school. In preparing the RPP, participants consider student needs and the most appropriate methods to improve teaching effectiveness. After planning is complete, participants enter the learning implementation stage. At this stage, participants start teaching in class by implementing the strategies they have previously prepared. Interaction with students is an important aspect in this stage, because the success of learning is highly dependent on the active involvement of students [30].

During the teaching process, participants conduct periodic evaluations to assess the effectiveness of the applied learning methods. This evaluation is carried out through self-reflection, feedback from the supervising teacher, and student responses to the material taught. Through self-reflection, participants can identify strengths and weaknesses in their teaching strategies. Meanwhile, input from the supervising teacher provides a more experienced perspective, helping participants adjust their approach. Student responses are also important indicators in assessing their understanding and engagement in learning [31]. The results of this evaluation are used to refine teaching methods to be more effective, interactive, and in accordance with student needs. In this study, the data analysis procedure was carried out using a thematic approach. Data collected from observations, interviews, and self-reflection were analyzed to identify patterns and main themes that emerged in the participants' experiences during the program. The testing method in this study was carried out through data triangulation [32]. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and personal reflections were compared to ensure the validity of the research results [33]. With this method, researchers can identify consistencies and differences in the teaching experiences of participants. Data acquisition in this study was carried out through various methods, including field notes, video recordings of learning, and in-depth interviews with supervising teachers and students. Each method has its own advantages in providing broader insights into the effectiveness of participants' teaching. All data collected were analyzed using an inductive approach. This analysis allows for the identification of patterns that emerge from participants' experiences and provides a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies used in the SEA Teacher program. With this comprehensive approach, the study is expected to provide a clear picture of the effectiveness of the SEA Teacher program in improving participants' teaching skills and their adaptation to the education system in another country.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Result

The results of the study showed that the SEA Teacher program had a positive impact on the teaching skills of participants. Based on observations in class, participants were able to adapt more interactive and participatory learning methods. From the results of interviews with students, it was found that most of them felt more enthusiastic in learning after being taught by SEA Teacher participants. They considered the teaching methods used to be more enjoyable and easier to understand. The following table shows the results of interviews with students regarding the effectiveness of the teaching methods applied.

Table 1. Comparison of Learning Aspects Before and After SEA Teacher

Assessment Aspect	Before SEA Teacher	After SEA Teacher
Learning Motivation	60%	85%
Understanding of Material	55%	80%
Involvement in Discussion	50%	82%

The results of the SEA Teacher participants' reflections also showed that they experienced improvements in pedagogical and communication skills. Participants realized the importance of flexibility in teaching and the ability to adjust learning methods to students' needs. From the evaluation results conducted by the supervising teacher, participants showed significant developments in the classroom management aspect. Before joining the program, some participants still had difficulty controlling class dynamics. However, after undergoing the program for several weeks, they were more confident in managing interactions with students.

In addition, it was found that the project-based learning approach implemented by SEA Teacher participants succeeded in increasing student creativity. For example, in English learning, students were asked to make interactive presentations using digital media. The results of this study indicate that the SEA Teacher program has a significant impact on the development of participants' teaching skills. Based on observations and interviews, participants experienced improvements in aspects of adapting learning methods, classroom management, and cross-cultural communication. Data collected through independent reflection also showed that participants felt more confident in facing challenges in classes that have different cultures and education systems.

One of the main findings was the increase in participants' ability to apply active learning methods. Before joining the program, most participants still used the lecture method in teaching. However, after being directly involved in the program, they began to adopt a student-centered learning approach that was more effective in increasing student engagement. The following table presents a comparison of the teaching methods used by participants before and after participating in the SEA Teacher program:

Table 2. Comparison of Teaching Methods Before and After SEA Teacher

Teaching Method	Before SEA Teacher	After SEA Teacher
Lecture	65%	20%
Group Discussion	20%	50%
Project-Based Learning	10%	25%
Other Innovative Approaches	5%	5%

From the table, it can be seen that the use of the lecture method decreased drastically after participants gained teaching experience abroad. Instead, they began to use group discussions and project-based learning more often to increase student interaction. In addition, the results of interviews with supervising teachers at the target schools showed that participants were successful in adapting to the education system implemented. Local teachers appreciated how participants were able to understand students' needs and develop learning strategies that were in accordance with the local curriculum. This shows that the SEA Teacher program is effective in equipping prospective teachers with good adaptation skills.

3.2. Discussion

3.2.1. Impact of the SEA Teacher Program on the Development of Teaching Skills

Participation in the SEA Teacher program has a significant impact on the development of participants' teaching skills. Direct experience in managing classes with different cultural backgrounds provides an opportunity for participants to develop adaptability and innovation in their teaching methods. The increase in students' learning motivation after the SEA Teacher program shows that more interactive learning methods can provide better results than conventional methods. Activities such as group discussions, presentations, and the use of digital media have been shown to increase student engagement in the learning process [34]. Therefore, the integration of technology in learning is one aspect that needs to be considered in curriculum development [35].

3.2.2. Improving Pedagogical Skills and Insight into the Education System

In addition to improving participants' pedagogical skills, this program also contributes to broadening their insights into education systems in other countries. By experiencing firsthand the differences in curriculum and education culture, participants can adopt best practices that can be applied in their home countries. This shows that the SEA Teacher program not only benefits participants, but also the wider education system. From the results of the evaluation of the supervising teacher, SEA Teacher participants succeeded in developing their classroom management skills. At first, some participants had difficulty dealing with less motivated students. However, with guidance from local teachers and hands-on experience in the classroom, they were able to overcome these challenges and become more effective in teaching.

Table 3. Comparison of Classroom Management Strategies Before and After SEA Teacher

Classroom Management Strategies	Before SEA Teacher	After SEA Teacher
Verbal Warning	50%	30%
Positive Reinforcement	20%	45%
Reward-Punishment System	15%	20%

From the table above, it can be seen that the use of positive reinforcement strategies increased, indicating that participants better understood the importance of building a conducive learning environment through appreciation of students' good behavior. A conducive learning environment can increase student motivation and engagement by providing emotional support and relevant and meaningful learning opportunities [36]. Strategies such as the use of rewards, positive feedback, and supportive interactions between teachers and students can help create a positive and effective learning atmosphere [37].

3.2.3. Activity-Based Learning Method and Technology

The project-based learning method applied in this program is also one of the success factors. By actively involving students in learning, they can better understand the material in a more enjoyable way [38]. For example, in science subjects, students are asked to do simple experiments that allow them to learn through direct experience.

From the participants' perspective, the experience of teaching abroad provides its own challenges, especially in terms of communication [39]. Language and cultural differences require participants to develop more effective communication strategies [40]. Therefore, this program not only improves teaching skills but also participants' interpersonal skills. In addition, the SEA Teacher program also provides insight into the importance of a differentiated approach in teaching. Participants realize that each student has a different learning style, so variations in the method of delivering material are needed. This helps participants develop flexibility and creativity in teaching.

Considering all the results of this study, it can be said that the SEA Teacher program provides extensive benefits, both for participants, students, and educational institutions. To improve the effectiveness of this program in

the future, further training is recommended for participants before they start the program. This training can cover teaching strategies, classroom management, and cross-cultural communication techniques.

In conclusion, the SEA Teacher program has succeeded in providing valuable experience for participants in facing real challenges in the world of education. With a more interactive and innovative approach, participants not only improve their teaching skills, but also provide a positive impact on the students they teach [41]. Thus, this program can continue to be developed and expanded in scope to provide wider benefits to the world of education.

3.2.4. Impact of the SEA Teacher Program on Teaching and Participant Professionalism

Most participants stated that they were very satisfied with the experience they gained. They felt that the program provided new insights that were not only useful in teaching but also in developing their interpersonal skills. In terms of challenges, some participants expressed difficulties in dealing with language and cultural differences in the classroom. Some students had difficulty understanding instructions due to differences in vocabulary used. However, participants were able to overcome this challenge by using visual aids, body movements, and other communicative approaches.

The results of the observation also showed that student engagement in the learning process increased after participants implemented activity-based learning techniques. Students were more active in discussions, asked more questions, and were more enthusiastic in working on group assignments. This shows that the approach implemented by participants has a positive impact on student learning motivation [42].

In addition to learning methods, this study also highlighted the importance of good classroom management. Before joining the program, some participants had difficulty controlling classroom dynamics, especially in dealing with students who were less disciplined. However, after gaining experience at the target school, participants began to implement more effective strategies, such as the use of positive reinforcement and a clear rule-based approach.

In terms of the use of technology in learning, participants also experienced significant changes. Before the program, most participants still used traditional methods with blackboards and textbooks as their main tools. However, after joining the program, they began to utilize various technologies such as digital presentations, learning videos, and interactive applications to improve the effectiveness of their teaching.

In addition to qualitative results, the program also showed a significant impact in terms of developing participants' professional skills. They admitted to being more confident in facing the class, more open to feedback, and more prepared to teach in various environments with different student characteristics. In addition, direct experience in the field helped them hone their adaptation, communication, and innovation skills in learning, which are valuable provisions for their careers in education.

The SEA Teacher program also helps participants build professional networks with teachers in the destination country. This opens up opportunities for future collaboration and provides new insights into education policies at the international level. Some participants even got inspired to continue their studies or develop cross-country education projects. Overall, the results of this study indicate that the SEA Teacher program has a positive impact on various aspects of teaching and the professionalism of participants. From improving learning methods to better classroom management, the program has succeeded in creating valuable experiences for prospective teachers [43].

The conclusion of this study is that teaching experience abroad not only provides a broader understanding of the education system, but also improves teaching skills and cultural awareness of participants. Therefore, programs such as SEA Teacher need to be continuously developed so that more prospective teachers can feel the benefits and contribute to improving the quality of education in their respective countries.

4. CONCLUSION

The SEA Teacher program has been proven to have a positive impact on the development of teaching skills, classroom management, cross-cultural communication, and the use of technology in learning, which significantly increases participants' confidence in facing multicultural classes. Improvements in interactive learning methods, positive reinforcement strategies, and adaptation to language and cultural challenges demonstrate the effectiveness of this program in forming more professional and innovative future educators. In addition, increased student motivation and engagement in the learning process confirms the contribution of SEA Teacher in improving the quality of education. With its broad benefits, this program is a valuable investment in producing teachers with a global perspective, as well as opening up opportunities for cross-country educational cooperation. It is hoped that the results of this study will open up opportunities for the development of similar programs on a larger scale and the implementation of additional training before departure to maximize its impact. In addition, further studies can be conducted to explore the long-term impact of the SEA Teacher experience on participants' career development and their contribution to educational innovation in their home countries.

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