

# University of Mataram in SEA Teacher Project: Lesson Learned From Students’ Perspectives and Self-Reflection

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**Abstract**—Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of University Mataram (FKIP Unram) has participated in SEA Teacher program – a student teacher exchange initiative between Southeast Asia countries – since 4<sup>th</sup> batch in 2017. In order to better organize the program in the future and to get the upmost achievable benefits both for the faculty and the students themselves, SEA Teacher alumni feedback was collected. Student’s feedback is described in the present study in chronologically order. In general, alumni responded positively to the program they have experienced, especially in exposing them to foreign culture and education system. However, several notes are addressed to the faculty for the betterment of the program in future.

**Keywords**— SEA Teacher, FKIP Unram, student exchange.

## I. INTRODUCTION

As the world becomes borderless in the almost all aspects, the student mobility is currently a global need. The trend is also growing up for teaching related education. Motivation behind the mobility can be attributed to real need for the pre-service student teacher to perform practicum in other country as anticipation for further work opportunity or diverge students background they have to deal with in the future, or to a more superficial reason that almost all universities nowadays are judged by their ‘international engagement’ so that the students need to go abroad, along with faculty exchange. Considering those facts and the effort to achieve university vision and mission, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP) University of Mataram (Unram) participated in the SEA Teacher project since 4th batch in August 2017.

The present report describes the alumni views and opinions on how the program was prepared at university level, what problem they encountered during their immersion, how the program benefited them, and what improvement should be done in the management of the program.

This report should not be regarded as the comprehensive analysis of students’ development gained in the exchange program. It mainly serves as reflective study for the exchange management so that in the future the program may give more benefit to the students.

## II. METHOD

Data were gathered from the alumni of SEA Teacher project from FKIP Unram which consist of 17 students. The country distribution and gender of students are depicted in Table 1, and students’ major is shown in Table 2. Questionnaire was distributed via google form and the raw data were processed into graphs for clarity.

TABLE 1. UNIVERSITY OF MATARAM STUDENTS DISTRIBUTION IN BATCH 4-8 SEA TEACHER PROJECT

Batch	n	Thai	Phil	m	f
4	3	3	0	0	3
5	2	1	1	1	1
6	5	0	5	1	4
7	2	0	2	1	1
8	5	0	5	2	3
Total	17	4	13	5	12

TABLE 2. STUDENT’S MAJOR IN BATCH 4-8 SEA TEACHER PROJECT

Batch	n	English	Sci	Math	Elementary Ed
4	3	2	1	0	0
5	2	0	2	0	0
6	5	4	0	1	0
7	2	1	1	0	0
8	5	2	2	0	1
Total	17	9	6	1	1

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### A. Participants

University of Mataram first joined the SEA Teacher project in the fourth batch in August 2017. 17 students have since participated in the project whose distribution is described in Table 1. Since FKIP Unram facilitated the students with return air ticket, the amino of students to join the project was very high; hence the competition among students is very tough. The selection of the students was based on their preparedness, in which language and communication skills, own and intercultural understanding, academic and extracurricular achievement were considered. Surprisingly, after going through competitive selection,

female students were by far dominated the number of male students (Table 1). It also revealed that, prior to internal selection, most students (81% of total 17 students) prepared themselves for interview, especially in English as the instruction language. Most students (88%) also have never gone abroad, and one student even admitted that he has never traveled by airplane.

In contrast to that background, only 23.5% of students said they have anxiety to travel overseas, whereas 29.4% of them have no concern. As predicted, 47.1% of students argued to have confidence because they know that they will travel with other students, either from the same university or from other participating universities in Indonesia.

*B. At the host university*

Regardless of the host university location, most students (82.4%) were satisfied with their host’s hospitality and accommodation service. In most cases, the students (70.6%) also didn’t need to spend extra money for daily transport from apartment to school.

During the immersion period, in the scale of 5, most student said their interaction partners were the participating teachers and other exchange students (4.47 and 4.70, respectively), whereas a slightly lower interaction with university mentor, i.e. by 3.94 in average was evident. This is not surprising as most of the assigned mentors are active lecturers in their campus, and/or at the same time positioned as university’s international officials who are mostly loaded with other tasks.

*C. Curriculum*

To the question as to whether the students have difficulties in the teaching phases in their immersion, majority of the students (76.5%) responded that they had no difficulties. Accordingly, 82.4% of the students said that they found no problem in adjusting and creating lesson plans. Apparently, from our experience in guiding students from Thailand and Phillipines, Indonesian structure of lesson plans is much more complete (and complicated), so that our students have little hinderance in preparing their lesson plans in practicum school. This finding cannot be extrapolated to a conclusion that they did not encounter any problems. Similar study undertaken for Pangasinan State University involvement in SEA Teacher project suggested that challenges had been encountered in every phase of immersion (orientation, assistantship, real teaching and evaluation phase [1]. On the other hand, it is found that 41.2% of the students opined that the lesson contents in their practicum schools are more thorough in comparison to the same class in Indonesia (Fig. 1). It is their intensive communication with respective cooperating teachers have played an important role in helping them to deal with those challenges.

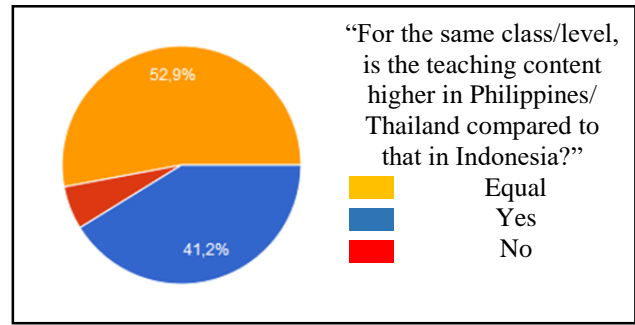


Fig. 1. Students’ response to the question about the teaching content in their practicum school

*D. Cultural adjustment*

Students participating in this project have been through competitive selection. In term of English proficiency, in addition to TOEFL prediction test, interview in English was served as tool to allow only qualified students to join the exchange project. This competitive selection process did not automatically prevent problem encountered by students during their exchange period. The first and easily predicted problem was problem in finding suitable food (reported by 70.6 of students). As most of outbound students from University of Mataram are moslem with some restriction in food choices, being in non-moslem majority region could mean troublesome situation. The next problem was dealing with internet connection and adjusting prayer times, reported by 41.2% and 35.3% of students, respectively.

Irrespective of religion background, mobility from developed country to other developed country, or from developed country to developing country, cultural problem and adjustment are cases that always exist [2]–[4]. The actual task for sending university, hence, is not to belittle the potential cultural problem the student would encounter during immersion, but to prepare the students how to deal with those problems, and most importantly is to ensure the students are confident and able to communicate those problems with their host mentors and cooperating teachers right at the beginning of the program.

*E. Exchange management*

Since the first engagement of University of Mataram in SEA Teacher project, the university coordinator routinely attended the evaluation meeting of previous batch and preparation of upcoming batch. Nevertheless, during immersion period, there were some new problems that had not been anticipated, such as an implementation of new regulation in the host country. When it relates to financial issue that the students have to bear, then the problem becomes an issue that the coordinator has to deal with.

In general, outbound students perceived that university coordinator has been acted as the main supporting party during the program, followed by respective faculty and university/rectorate level administration (Table 3).

TABLE 3. STUDENT’S PERCEPTION TO EXCHANGE ORGANIZATION

No	Aspect	Score*
1	Pre-departure orientation	3.94
2	Support at university level	3.59
3	Support at faculty level	4.29
4	Support at coordinator level	4.53
5	Overall program	4.82

\*) out of 5

F. Suggestion for sending university

To sum the student’s story up, it is obvious that the students responded very positively to the exchange program (Table 3). Nevetheles, there are some suggestions from the students to the University of Mataram as the organizer of the exchange. As an exact mirror to the students’ perception to the components involved during the implementation of the program (Table 1), Fig. 2 shows students’ opinion to the question dealing with which party should improve its role in the program. The involvement of the university/rectorate level sits at the first place, followed by faculty and SEA Teacher coordinator.

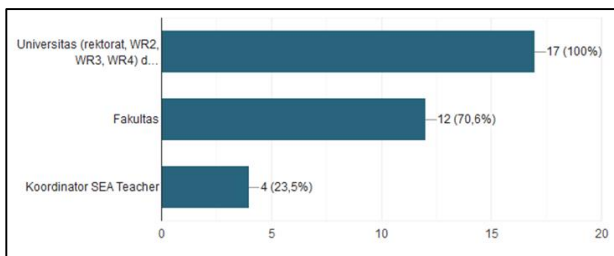


Fig. 2. Parties whose support in the program need to be improve in the future

In addition to the above opinion, students expect that the immersion could be prolonged to be at least two months. The cycle they experienced, from orientation, assistentship, real teaching and evaluation completed in one month program is considered to be too short and such issue also frequently appeared during evaluation meeting. To date, under multi university agreement, the idea to extend the program is not foreseeable. However, experience from other type of program emphasizes that a short term of exchange can still be as effective as the initial hope [4].

The introduction of new professional teacher education program called PPG (Program Pendidikan Guru) for in-service teacher by the Ministry of Education and Cultural in recent years could also considered as potential subject of teacher exchange, as was also anticipated in the 8<sup>th</sup> Batch evaluation meeting of SEA Teacher and the preparation of 2020-2024 agenda of SEA Teacher. Such an exchange has also been reported beneficial for the in-service teacher [5].

In the future, a consise study regarding the effect of student teacher overseas praticum needs to be analysed thoroughly, as there is also critical view of the actual impact of the exchange, especially in term of intercultural understanding [6].

IV. CONCLUSION

Student exchange is regarded as global trends, not only in developed countries. In the Southeast Asia, the same spirit is

also existing. SEA Teacher project initiated by SEAMEO offered a good opportunity to start the international exchange and give opportunity to all level of universities to promote internationalization. Not only from university perspectives, the need for student exchange is clearly for the benefit of students development themselves. In the case of FKIP Unram, students have demonstrated clear progress after joining the program. Cultural understanding, international communication where English is the main instructional tool, mutual respect and self-confident are among the values the students obtained through the one month exchange program. Nonetheloes, few concern accompanying the program, from selection, preparation, monitoring and evaluation cycle are worthy to be considered for future betterment of the program, especially for FKIP Unram students.

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