A Reflective Study on *SEA Teacher* Practice: from Thailand to Indonesia

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Abstract
The goal of the Pre-service teacher program or SEA Teacher Program under the SEAMEO are for providing the experience to the partner universities in teaching internationally, improving their English skills, as well as expanding their worldwide networking and knowledge. Through the program the students require to do observation, teaching assistance, teaching, and reflection on what they experience at the pointed schools. Though the program is well established, however, some lacks are still existed. The present study aims to reflect what the four participants experience during the pre-service teacher program. The discussion of the interview and observation data is conducted under the reflective study on four points namely school and class observation, teaching assistance, teaching, and reflection.

Keywords: SEA Teacher, Observation, Teaching Assistance, Teaching, Reflection

Article Info

Introduction

Pre-Service Student Teacher Exchange in South East Asia known as SEA Teacher Program is one of the Southeast Asia Ministry of Education Organization (SEAMEO) priorities in education in Southeast Asia for revitalizing teacher education. For joining the program, the universities have to sign Letter of Agreement in which the universities agree for the cost-sharing system. The universities, who send the students, are required to set the course credit equivalent, screen the candidates via teleconference/Skype, provide additional training for the students, and assist the students’ travel documents. Conversely, the host universities which accept the pre-service teacher students must send the picture of the student residence facilities, pick the students in the airport, provide study buddy, inform the partner schools to the sender universities, communicate to the schools and inform the evaluation form to the students earlier.

The undergraduate students who are eligible for the program are those who are majoring early childhood, English, Math, and Science. The program is conducted in one month in which the students are responsible in classroom observation, teaching assistant, teaching, and reflection. For monitoring the pre-service teacher students during the SEA Teacher program, the host universities provide mentors. The main responsibilities of the mentors are, supervising and monitoring the students’ activities during the program.

The SEA Teacher program is designed to give opportunity for students from universities in Southeast Asia in having pre-service teacher practicum in schools in Southeast Asia countries. In other words, the program is for developing the teaching and pedagogy of the students. Besides, the SEA Teacher provides worldwide experience as well as improve the English skills. Thus, the main goals of the program are on pedagogy, international experience and English.

Practically, pre-service teacher students often face difficulties when they are at schools in other countries. Mostly it is because of the English barrier and cultural distance between the students and the targeted schools. The present study focuses on the reflection of the pre-service teacher students who practiced teaching at schools in Indonesia. The reflections in the present study were depicted on the four steps on the pre-service teacher program namely school/class observation, teaching assistance, teaching and teaching reflection. Gibbs (1988) introduces a reflective practice cycle framework consisting of six phases; description (picturing what happened), feelings (showing thinking and feeling), evaluation (judging the experience), analysis (the senses of the situation), conclusion (something else), and action plan (planning).
Method

The present qualitative study invited four SEA Teacher students from Chiang Mai Rajabhat University and Chiang Rai Rajabhat University who were sent to Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamanisiswa from August to September 2019. For collecting the data, the researcher did some interviews and observations. The data were analyzed qualitatively by coding, classifying, analyzing, drawing conclusion and displaying the data (Miles et al., 2014).

Results and Discussion

Pre-Departure Program

The participants of the current study experienced differently in joining the SEA Teacher program. Before departing to Indonesia, all participants passed some steps in their home country, such as university selection, registration, and pre-departure program. Since the pre-departure program varied depending on the universities policy, the students’ English skills and knowledge in cross culture understanding were also different.

Table 1 describes the preparations of the pre-service teacher students before arriving in Indonesia. In preparing the language, two participants, P1 and P2, took formal English pre-departure course managed by the lecturers in their home university. The rest did not have formal course from their university. They mostly prepared themselves by practicing English with friends and online Google translate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Language</th>
<th>CCU</th>
<th>Financial</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>formal and</td>
<td>course,</td>
<td>7,000 THB (around US $ 229)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>formal and</td>
<td>course,</td>
<td>10,000 THB (around US $328)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>internet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>internet</td>
<td>around US $ 500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>independent</td>
<td>internet</td>
<td>around US $ 400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

R : Did you prepare your English before you travelled to Indonesia?
P2 : yes
R : What was it about?
P1 : in our campus (P1 and P2), we had to join additional English course every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon with our mentors.
     We practiced to speak English.
R : nice, only two days you both practiced English?
P1 : No
P2 : No..No..for me…I practiced with my friends.
R : with P1?
P2 : Yes but I also asked my other friends to speak English with me.
R : Did it work?
P2 : Yeah… It work but sometimes no

The materials cover daily conversation practice, language used in administration, and teaching instructions. Besides, they also practiced their English conversation skills with their friends. P2 mentions that her friends supported her much by being her partners in English speaking practices before and after the classes.

In knowing Indonesia and its cultures, P1 and P2 gained from their pre-departure program as well as browed internet independently. Apparently, P3 and P4 learnt themselves about Indonesia through internet browser. This is understandable, though, when P3 wanted to go Bali a day before she left Indonesia.

P3 : miss, I want Bali
R : to Bali?
P3 : yes
R : Why?
P3 : beach I love beach
R : Bali is quite far from Jogja. You need to take a flight.
P3 : fight?
R : yes. How did you know Bali?
P3 : internet. Picture beautiful. I love beach
R : I see. You need extra expenses if you wanna go to Bali. Secondly, your visa does not support it. Tomorrow you will leave Jogja. It risks if you go to Bali.

Related to the finance, they also differ in how much money they prepared during their staying in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Table 1 shows that P3 brought the most money. She explained that she planned to buy souvenirs from Indonesia for her family, friends and lecturers. She spent much around US $ 100 for buying home-made bags, key chains, Batik scarf and dress. She also enjoyed her exploration in shopping centers in Yogyakarta.

The extracted data taken from the WhatsApp chat proved that US $ 300 was enough for one-month-living cost in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. P2 explained that she still brought around US $ 60 back. During her living in Yogyakarta, P2 spent much on souvenirs.

**Week One: Observation**

The observation on school and class cultures was conducted on the first week of the Pre-service teacher program. The observation was mostly on how teacher managed and taught the students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Subject to teach</th>
<th>Student level</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Junior School</td>
<td>Private school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Primary School Grade 5</td>
<td>International school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Movement, Rhythm, Creative Activities</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>International school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Movement, Rhythm, Creative Activities</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>International school</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Besides, the participants also observed the school cultures. School culture is shaped by norms, beliefs and practices (Hollins, 1996). Whatever the teachers do at school, such as their dress, topics of talks, and teaching techniques, is affected by the school cultures (Hargreaves, 1997; Kottler, 1997; Peterson & Deal, 1998). Though both schools welcomed for all participants, the schools have different cultures. In P1 school, the students were more friendly and close to P1. The students were always active to communicate to P1 outside the class. They tried to talk as friends and to share cultures. P1 frequently brought various Indonesian snacks and food received from the students and school. Not only the students, the teachers and parents also supported P1 in her activities at school. P1 was involved in various extracurricular activities such as scout program and community service. The parents were also happy of being a part of P1 experience at the Indonesian school. Some parents sometimes invited P1 for dinner or lunch. Even, the parents, students and teachers designed an informal farewell party for P1 before she was back for good. Surely, P1 admitted that she had a great experience during her short pre-service teacher at school. She did not feel home sick as she really enjoyed her days at school.

In contrary, P2-P3, who were in the same school, experienced different school cultures from P1. P2-P3 did not have close communication with either students or teachers, even parents. The barrier among them was very rigid built. The communication with the students was only happened when they were in the classroom. Outside the classroom, the pre-service teacher students mostly helped the cooperating teachers in preparing the teaching and learning media.

**Week Two: Teaching Assistant**

On the second week, the pre-service teacher students assisted the cooperating teacher while learning the class culture they would practice in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Assistance</th>
<th>Student level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>- Preparing the media</td>
<td>Junior School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Involving the extracurricular</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Joining the community service</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>- Photocopying the worksheets</td>
<td>Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparing the learning materials</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>- Photocopying the worksheets</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparing the learning materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>- Photocopying the worksheets</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Preparing the learning materials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 describes clear activities which the pre-service teacher students did during their program at schools. P1 was the only one who experienced differently. She did various assistance to the cooperating teacher as well as the school. It is also seen that P2 did not only help the teacher in preparing the teaching and learning media, she was also involved in the school program in scout extracurricular and school community service. P1 said that she felt like a family member in that school since they treated her like a relative and guest. She spent around seven hours at school from 7 A.M to 2 P.M. The rest hours were free for her, whether she would be at school or go home. However, she commonly spent her times with students and parents in having informal gathering.

Differently, the rest participants were treated as office workers. They should follow most rules as school staff such as following the office hour, the recess culture and communication behaviors. Unlike P1, the others should attend to the school at 8 A.M and go home at 4 P.M. If their classes had finished, they should help the cooperating teacher in preparing the new teaching and learning materials until 4 P.M.
### Week Three: Teaching

The following table show the data of the teaching and learning materials which the pre-service teacher students prepared for their teaching practices in the classrooms.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Subject to teach</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Student level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>- Characteristics of Organism</td>
<td>Junior School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Kingdom Monera, Protista, Fungi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Natural Science</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>- Pollination</td>
<td>Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Fertilization</td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>Movement, Rhythm, Creative Activities</td>
<td>- Colors</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Animal (elephant)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
<td>Movement, Rhythm, Creative Activities</td>
<td>- Elephant bracelet</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Animal (fish)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 show the description of the participants and their teaching practices. The choosing of the student levels and schools to those pre-service teacher students were based on the educational background, the level of the English proficiency, and the teaching skills. Among the four participants, two are from Early Childhood Department and the rests are from Chemistry and Natural Sciences Departments. In Indonesia, they were sent to kindergarten schools, primary school and junior high school.

During their pre-service teacher activities, the participants were accompanied by buddies who were responsible in assisting them in establishing their first days and preparing the teaching materials. In this case, the students’ buddies were not merely their friends to faster their establishment, but also support their pre-service teacher activities. Besides, mentors and cooperating teachers were also essential in compiling the teaching and learning materials. P1, for example, in preparing the topics of characteristics of organism, Kingdom Monera, Protista, and Fungi for Grade 8 of a junior high school in Yogyakarta, her cooperating teacher supports her by giving her opportunities in asking and having discussions before teaching. P1 almost did not face any difficulties in preparing and delivering her materials to the students. She used power point materials as well as printed exercise sheet for monitoring the students’ responses on her teaching. Though in different school, P2 experienced similarly in her teaching preparation and practices. She prepared the learning materials in power point, worksheet, and learning aids. In describing the pollination, for example, P2 demonstrated the process using the used mineral water bottle, yarn, and bee relia.

Apparently, P3 and P4, who taught kindergarten levels in the same school as P2, did not use slides for their teaching aid. This is because the students, though were in international school, had not mastered English yet. The students were still in a truly beginner. Moreover, the English competence of P3 and P4 were not sufficient. Consequently, during the teaching and learning process, the cooperating teachers were still involved. In introducing elephant, for example, P3 applied song, Thai storytelling, and puzzle techniques. This is different from P4 who only invited the young learners to make a bracelet from elephant beads. From those techniques, P3 showed her understanding on the children’ characteristics in learning. Song is still an effective for teaching English for young learners. However, sometimes, English young learners do not understand the meaning of the song lyrics they sing. Visualizing the song lyrics into physical movement, gestures or mimics are effective in helping the young learners in grasping the meaning (Kurniati & Widyastuti, 2019; Widyastuti et al., 2019). Interestingly, P3 introduced a song in both English and Thai songs on Elephant. For sure, the students were engaged well as they listened different and language they commonly practice and use daily. Storytelling was also used nicely when P3 told a story of Thai elephant story. Once again, the students were interested in listening the story, though, sometimes the students had to asked or confirmed the translation into Bahasa. Storytelling is also frequent teaching technique used for kids in which teacher may introduce English vocabulary as well as gambits to kids (Onu, 2013).
Week Four: Teaching Reflection

On the last week of the pre-service teacher program, all participants were evaluated by the cooperating teachers as well as the university mentors. Most teachers and mentors responded positively except on the language barrier face by P3 and P4. Both participants were hardly struggling in their communication with the teachers, mentors and students. Consequently, they frequently kept silent and tended to be passive. In the interview, P3 mentioned that they did not feel comfortable having the pre-service teacher practices in the targeted school due to its rigid school rules especially on the office hours. She thought that she would also have more free time as P1 so that she could explore more cultures and gain more experience during her living in Yogyakarta. P2 and P3 who were in the same school agreed with P3’s opinion. Moreover, P2 mentioned that they felt insulted when in recess time, no teachers talked to them. Often, some teachers flirted on them then laughed with colleagues.

Conclusion

The present study depicted to find out the reflection of the pre-service teacher students who experienced around a month teaching in two schools in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Based on the four-week reflection, it can be concluded that school cultures affect on the performance and views of the pre-service teacher students. However, above all, English communication skills seem to be the prominent requirement which the students who join the SEA Teacher Program must acquire. Therefore, it is essential for the universities to design a pre-departure program as well as an introductory program containing cross culture understanding, school cultures and teaching instruction.

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References


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