

# **CHAPTER I**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background of the Research**

The SEA Teacher Project, officially known as the Pre-Service Student Teacher Exchange in Southeast Asia, provides pre-service teachers with practical teaching experience across ASEAN countries. This initiative, led by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), promotes cross-cultural understanding, regional collaboration, and essential teaching skills among participants. By engaging in teaching practicums in various educational settings, participants enhance their hands-on teaching abilities while contributing to SEAMEO's goal of improving teacher education in Southeast Asia. The program is designed for fourth-year students majoring in Mathematics, Science, English, and Early Childhood Education, offering them a month-long structured exchange experience (SEAMEO, n.d.).

At Universitas Jambi, this initiative is recognized as PPL International ASEAN, an extracurricular academic activity for undergraduate (S1) students. It enhances the university's traditional internship program by placing students in practical settings within ASEAN member countries. The program combines theory with practice to strengthen participants' curriculum application competencies, enabling them to demonstrate both academic knowledge and practical skills in an international context. Through this initiative, participants are given valuable opportunities to refine their teaching abilities, advance their English proficiency, and broaden their regional and global outlook. Additionally, the program offers pre-service teachers' exposure to diverse educational environments, encouraging

flexibility and adaptability in various teaching and learning situations (Universitas Jambi International Office, n.d.).

As a participant in Batch 10 of the SEA Teacher Program, my journey was both challenging and rewarding. I encountered several significant challenges, including curriculum adaptation, classroom management in diverse settings, linguistic and communication barriers, and cultural sensitivity in the Philippines. However, through continuous learning and support from my resource teacher, I overcame these obstacles and developed innovative teaching strategies. The program significantly enhanced my personal and professional skills, improving my teaching abilities and personal traits through exposure to different Southeast Asian educational practices. It also strengthened my classroom adaptability, broadened my worldview, and improved my communication skills. This experience provided me with a deeper understanding of language, cultural norms, and education systems. Ultimately, this journey has solidified my passion for teaching and inspired me to continue exploring international educational opportunities.

Several studies reveal the substantial challenges faced by SEA Teacher Program participants when teaching English in the Philippines. Musa and Ariyanti (2020) point out that participants encounter difficulties due to curriculum differences, classroom management, and limited confidence, underscoring the need for more extensive preparation and support for these teachers. Rahmawati and Kurniawan (2020) identify language barriers as a significant obstacle, with participants often struggling to overcome differences in accents, dialects, and vocabulary, which can disrupt communication with local students.

Despite these challenges, the program yields significant benefits. Research consistently shows that international teaching internships contribute to personal and professional growth. Arquillano (2022) highlights how international teaching experiences enhance participants' personal qualities and teaching competencies, particularly in communication, engagement with the local school environment, and work ethics. Arquillano's study emphasizes the development of better communication skills and motivation to actively engage with local school standards, resulting in improved adaptability and organizational behavior. Similarly, Malaysian pre-service science teachers in Brunei and Indonesia improved their teaching strategies, communication, and interpersonal skills while expanding their perspectives on science education and culture (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Prior research has identified obstacles such as curriculum differences, classroom management challenges, and linguistic barriers (Musa & Ariyanti, 2020; Rahmawati & Kurniawan, 2020). However, there remains a significant gap in research specifically focusing on the challenges and adaptive strategies employed by SEA Teacher participants in teaching English. While general challenges have been documented, the adaptive mechanisms that participants use to overcome these hurdles in the context of teaching English, and how these experiences refine their teaching competencies, are underexplored. This research aims to fill this gap by examining the unique experiences of SEA Teacher Batch 10 participants in the Philippines. By focusing on the challenges and benefits specifically related to teaching English, this study will offer a deeper understanding of how international teaching programs shape the teaching abilities and overall professional development of the participants.

This study focuses on examining the experiences of SEA Teacher Batch 10 participants in the Philippines, particularly the challenges faced, adaptive strategies employed, and benefits gained in teaching English as a subject. The study is limited to the specific context of teaching English, and may not reflect the challenges and adaptive strategies relevant to other subjects. Despite these limitations, this research holds significant relevance for policymakers, program organizers, and educators seeking to enhance the design and implementation of international teaching internships. By addressing gaps in existing literature, this study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how international teaching experiences can be leveraged to support the professional development of pre-service teachers.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

1. What are the challenges faced by SEA Teacher participants when teaching English in the Philippines?
2. How do SEA Teacher participants overcome these challenges?
3. What benefits do participants gain from the SEA Teacher program in the Philippines, specifically in improving their English teaching skills?

## **1.3 Purposes of the Research**

In line with the above research questions, the purposes of this research are:

1. Identifying the challenges faced by participants while teaching English
2. Explore the strategies they use to overcome these challenges.
3. Understand the benefits participants gain, particularly in terms of enhancing their English teaching skills.

#### **1.4 Limitation of the Research**

This research is specifically limited to investigating the teaching of the English language, excluding other subjects or broader educational practices. The study focuses exclusively on participants involved in the SEA Teacher Program from Universitas Jambi, specifically from Batch 10. Additionally, the scope of this research is confined to the teaching experiences in the Philippines, excluding other countries where the SEA Teacher Program may be implemented.

#### **1.5 Significant of the Research**

##### **1. For Future SEA Teacher Participants**

The study equips future participants with practical strategies for overcoming common challenges in English teaching abroad, particularly in the Philippines. By understanding these experiences, participants can better prepare for cultural and linguistic differences, building resilience and adaptability essential for their professional growth.

##### **2. For Educational Institutions**

Universities and teacher training institutions can use this study's findings to enhance pre-service teacher preparation, integrating intercultural and classroom management training. These insights reinforce the value of international teaching experiences, supporting improvements in curriculum design that better prepare teachers for global classrooms.

##### **3. For the Researcher**

This research enables the researcher to contribute to the field of international teacher education, specifically in English language teaching and cross-cultural

pedagogy. It serves as a foundation for further study on the impact of exchange programs, enriching the understanding of teacher development in diverse educational contexts.

## **1.6 Definition of the Key Terms**

### **1. SEA Teacher Project**

The SEA Teacher Project, also known as the "Pre-Service Student Teacher Exchange in Southeast Asia," is an initiative by SEAMEO aimed at providing student teachers with the opportunity to conduct practicum experiences in different Southeast Asian countries, fostering regional collaboration and cultural exchange.

### **2. Teaching Challenges**

Teaching challenges refer to the difficulties or obstacles that SEA Teacher Program participants encounter while instructing students in English in a foreign setting. These challenges may include differences in curriculum, language barriers, classroom management, and cultural adaptation.

### **3. Benefits**

This encompasses the positive outcomes and advantages gained from participating in the SEA Teacher Program, such as professional growth, cultural exchange, and improved teaching skills.

### **4. Pre-Service Teacher**

A pre-service teacher is a student who is undergoing training and practical experience in teaching before becoming a fully certified educator. In this study, pre-service teachers are participants in the SEA Teacher Program.