

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 Conclusions

This study sought to investigate the real-world experiences of SEA Teacher Program Batch 10 participants as they undertook the task of teaching English in the Philippines, a context markedly different from their own. The research focused on three central questions: the challenges participants encountered during their teaching practicum, the strategies they employed to overcome those challenges, and the benefits they ultimately gained, especially in relation to their professional growth as future English teachers. The findings revealed a rich, multilayered narrative of transformation, growth, and resilience.

The challenges faced by participants were categorized into four major themes, each revealing unique difficulties of navigating a foreign educational and cultural setting. The first major challenge was curriculum adaptation, where participants had to transition from the Indonesian educational structure to the Philippine curriculum. This shift was not merely technical; it required a rethinking of lesson planning strategies, an adjustment to English as the sole medium of instruction, and the use of unfamiliar instructional resources and methods. Furthermore, participants were expected to localize their content, integrating Philippine cultural elements into their lessons, which demanded quick learning and flexibility.

The second major challenge involved managing classrooms in a diverse, multicultural environment. Participants were often placed in large classrooms, sometimes with more than fifty students, and needed to engage with learners who

were more outspoken and participative than those typically encountered in Indonesia. This shift in classroom dynamics called for creative and responsive classroom management techniques. Compounding this were difficulties in establishing rapport with students due to initial cultural disconnection and unfamiliarity with the social norms that shaped student-teacher relationships in the host schools.

Another significant area of difficulty was linguistic and communication barriers. Despite being English majors, many participants found themselves struggling with vocabulary limitations, pronunciation confidence, and spontaneous speech production. The challenge was further complicated by the students' frequent use of local languages such as Ilocano, and regional accents that posed a barrier to mutual understanding. Participants often found it difficult to interpret and respond effectively in such linguistically complex environments.

The final category of challenge revolved around cultural sensitivity and adaptation. Participants had to quickly acclimate to new ways of thinking and behaving within a school culture that differed from their own. They encountered informal communication styles, unfamiliar food, religious and cultural practices, and a need to maintain their personal identity while respecting their host community. These cultural challenges were not only logistical but emotional, often requiring participants to reconcile their values with the realities of working abroad.

Despite these formidable challenges, participants showed remarkable adaptability and resilience. The strategies they employed to navigate these barriers were both creative and practical. To deal with curriculum differences, many

observed local teaching practices, consulted regularly with their resource teacher or assigned “buddies,” and modified their lesson plans accordingly. They shifted from relying on digital tools to more contextually relevant, physical teaching aids. For managing large and diverse classrooms, participants established structured classroom routines, incorporated interactive and motivational activities such as chants and games, and used positive reinforcement to maintain student engagement.

When facing linguistic difficulties, participants employed tools like Google Translate, dictionaries, and visual aids to bridge communication gaps. Non-verbal communication, including gestures and facial expressions, also became crucial in supporting comprehension. Cultural barriers were addressed through empathy, open-mindedness, and a conscious effort to understand the host country’s values and practices. Participants reflected on their own cultural positioning and worked to integrate local perspectives into their teaching in a respectful and inclusive manner.

The benefits participants gained from the program were equally profound and multifaceted. In terms of professional development, the experience significantly enhanced their English teaching skills. Immersion in an English-speaking environment led to noticeable improvements in fluency, pronunciation, and confidence in spontaneous communication. Participants learned to teach English more naturally and fluidly, incorporating authentic language use into their instruction. Moreover, they developed innovative and student-centred teaching strategies that included the use of instructional material, role-play, and culturally contextualized materials to stimulate learning. Most participants are committed to implementing these approaches in their home country, demonstrating the SEA

Teacher program's crucial role in fostering cross-national educational innovation and spreading impactful teaching practices beyond borders. Their classroom management skills also evolved, becoming more responsive and culturally harmonized.

Beyond professional skills, the program also fostered deep personal growth. Participants reported becoming more independent, responsible, and mature as they managed their lives and teaching duties abroad without their usual support systems. They developed stronger interpersonal skills and a broader worldview, learning to interact with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. These experiences not only strengthened their confidence as educators but also enhanced their cross-cultural communication abilities, which are essential for teachers in today's globalized world.

The long-term impacts of the SEA Teacher Program were also evident. Many participants expressed a renewed passion for teaching, with some aspiring to pursue international education careers or further academic opportunities abroad. The skills and experiences they acquired enhanced their professional portfolios and made them more competitive in future job or scholarship applications. Even among those who might not continue in teaching, the transferable skills, such as adaptability, cultural intelligence, and communication are proved invaluable. Ultimately, the program shaped participants into more holistic, culturally sensitive, and globally minded individuals, ready to contribute meaningfully to the field of education.

5.2 Implications

Based on the four core challenge themes: Curriculum Adaptation, Classroom Management, Linguistic and Communication Barriers, and Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptation, this section offers actionable implications for key stakeholders. Each recommendation draws not only on the difficulties reported by Batch 10 participants but also on the effective strategies they employed and the benefits they gained, ensuring a balanced set of corrective and amplifying measures.

5.2.1 Implications for Sending Universities

A. Curriculum Adaptation.

Participants repeatedly described the difficulty of shifting from semester-long, theory-driven plans at home to discrete, topic-focused Philippine lesson units, complete with ‘Motivation sections’ and ‘Detailed-Lesson plan’. To bridge this gap, teacher education programs should embed comparative curriculum workshops within methods courses, asking pre-service teachers to adapt both Indonesian and Philippine sample syllabi. A micro-teaching capstone in which delegates demonstrate lessons using authentic host-country templates will further cement their understanding of local formats. These activities build on participants demonstrated creativity, such as their innovative use of role-plays, teaching properties, and multimedia, to foster ongoing pedagogical innovation.

B. Classroom Management.

Several participants reported feeling overwhelmed by classes of 40 to 58 students, struggling to monitor learning and maintain engagement. Simulating large-group teaching in local practicum schools, where cohorts of pre-service teachers practice with more than 40 students, can provide realistic rehearsal.

Coupling these simulations with training in low-tech formative assessments will equip delegates with tools to track individual progress in crowded settings. Given that Batch 10 alumni later credited such routines with improved adaptability, these drills will help interns build confidence before departure.

C. Linguistic and Communication Barriers.

Breakdowns caused by unfamiliar dialects and vocabulary gaps “*a wall between me and the students*” – **P4**, highlight the need for survival-language modules. Integrating Tagalog/Filipino basics and paralinguistic strategy training either gesture and visuals into pre-departure courses, and pairing each delegate with a returnee alumni mentor for role-plays of common breakdown scenarios, are essential steps. Embedding a dedicated unit on Translanguaging in ELT, covering purposeful code-switching and scaffolded English, will further strengthen participants’ real-time communication skills.

D. Cultural Sensitivity and Adaptation.

Adjusting to casual student–teacher rapport and unfamiliar local etiquette emerged as a significant hurdle for participants. To foster intercultural competence, pre-departure training provides basic exposure on cultural-dimension theory, such as Hofstede’s framework, which equips pre-service teachers with insights into cultural contrasts like power distance, individualism versus collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). These concepts help participants better interpret classroom behaviours and authority dynamics in the host country, such as students’ informal interaction styles or differing attitudes toward hierarchy. A reflective journal, assessed at mid-practicum, will allow supervisors to monitor adjustment and provide targeted coaching. Finally,

formalizing pre-departure agreements (MOUs) with host schools that outline classroom norms, expected etiquette, and cultural protocols will help set clear expectations on both sides.

5.2.2 Implications for SEA Teacher Program Managers and Host Universities

Program managers and host institutions can reinforce sending-university efforts by co-creating a comprehensive onboarding toolkit that includes local curriculum overviews, classroom configuration guides, and cultural dos and don'ts. Assigning each delegate a local mentor teacher, selected for experience with large, multilingual classes, will ensure tailored in-service support. Structured mid-placement check-ins around week three or four can surface emergent curriculum, management, or cultural challenges early, allowing for timely interventions and reinforcing participants' confidence.

5.3 Suggestions

In light of the findings of this study, several key suggestions can be offered to ensure that the SEA Teacher Program continues to evolve and positively impact all parties involved.

First, for future participants of the SEA Teacher Program, it is crucial to undertake thorough preparation not only in English language proficiency but also in cultural awareness and pedagogical flexibility. Participants should proactively familiarize themselves with the host country's curriculum, classroom culture, and teaching expectations. Developing a mindset of openness, humility, and continuous learning is essential. Participants should also prepare emotionally for cultural

transitions, understanding that challenges are part of the process and can serve as catalysts for personal and professional growth.

Second, for universities and educational institutions organizing or supporting the SEA Teacher Program, greater emphasis should be placed on pre-departure training and continuous mentorship. Institutions should design comprehensive orientation programs that include modules on intercultural communication, curriculum adaptation, classroom management in large and diverse settings, and the practical use of English for teaching. Establishing a clear support system such as alumni mentoring networks or regular check-ins during the practicum also can provide participants with guidance and reassurance throughout their journey. Furthermore, consistent collaboration between sending and host institutions can help ensure that expectations are aligned and that both parties are equipped to support a mutually enriching exchange.

Finally, for future researchers, this study opens several avenues for further exploration. A long-term study is suggested to understand how the SEA Teacher experience influences participants' careers and personal growth over time. Comparative studies involving participants placed in different countries would also be valuable, offering insights into how context shapes challenges and benefits. Additionally, including perspectives from host school mentors, students, and administrators could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the program's broader educational and cultural impacts. By expanding the research scope, future studies can continue to strengthen the knowledge base on international teaching practicums and their role in shaping globally competent educators.