

Indonesian Pre-Service Teacher's Journey in International Teaching Practicum

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Abstract

The increasing importance of cross-cultural competence in education has made international teaching practicum (ITP) programs essential for pre-service teachers. These programs provide unique opportunities to enhance pedagogical skills and develop global awareness, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in diverse cultural contexts. However, the specific experiences of Indonesian pre-service teachers participating in ITP programs remain underexplored. This study aims to explore the experiences of Indonesian pre-service English teachers during an ITP program in Malaysia, focusing on the journey, personal growth, and professional development achieved throughout the program. Using a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, this exploratory case study examined the experiences of one Pre-service teacher from the English Education Department, referred to as "Budi," in a Malaysian Pesantren. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, reflective journals, and program documentation, then analyzed thematically using Braun & Clarke (2006) framework. The findings reveal that the participant gained essential teaching skills, leadership qualities, and cross-cultural understanding while facing challenges such as time management, cultural adaptation, and limited teaching opportunities. These experiences contributed significantly to the participant's personal and professional growth, highlighting the transformative impact of ITP programs. The study underscores the importance of ITP programs in preparing globally competent educators. By documenting the lived experiences of a pre-service teacher, the research provides valuable insights for program designers and policymakers seeking to enhance the effectiveness of international teaching initiatives.

Keywords: Cross-cultural learning, EFL teachers, international teaching practicum, pesantren

1. INTRODUCTION

The participation of Indonesian pre-service English teachers in international teaching practicum (ITP) programs offers a distinctive blend of educational advancement, cultural exchange, and professional development. These programs are instrumental in equipping future educators with the competencies necessary to thrive in an increasingly interconnected educational landscape (MacKinnon & Shields, 2020). For many, teaching abroad transcends academic requirements, becoming a transformative journey that broadens perspectives and enriches teaching methodologies. The experiences garnered during ITPs are pivotal in preparing pre-service teachers to effectively teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in diverse settings (Zhang & Wang, 2022). International teaching practicums are rooted in experiential learning, emphasizing knowledge acquisition through active participation in real-world environments. For Indonesian pre-service teachers, engaging in ITPs within various cultural and educational contexts presents opportunities to adapt teaching strategies and enhance cross-cultural understanding. Wulandari et al. (2019) note that such practicums bridge theoretical concepts with practical application, fostering educators' ability to meet diverse student needs. Similarly, Lestari et al. (2024) assert that cross-cultural experiences during practicums significantly bolster global teaching competencies, enabling educators to navigate the complexities of multicultural classrooms.

One critical aspect of the ITP experience is the preparation phase, which often requires participants to meet specific academic and certain documents. According to data obtained from interviews, participants like "Budi" undergo a rigorous selection process that includes submitting academic documents, such as TOEFL scores and curriculum vitae, followed by interviews conducted in English. These preparations are not merely procedural but serve as a foundation for the participants to reflect on their motivations and goals. For Budi, the motivation to join the program stemmed from a desire to fulfill academic requirements, explore opportunities abroad, and gain new experiences that would contribute to his personal and professional growth. This aligns with the findings of Setyaningsih et al. (2023), who argue that the need for professional growth, cultural exchange, and personal development drives the desire to gain international teaching exposure. Their study also highlights that pre-service teachers who undergo rigorous preparation often display higher levels of adaptability and resilience during the practicum.

Upon arrival at the host institution, the initial weeks of the ITP program are often marked by a mixture of excitement and challenges. Participants are required to adapt to new environments, establish relationships with students, mentors, and peers, and navigate cultural differences. Budi's experience in the first week exemplifies this transitional phase, as he was unexpectedly appointed as the group leader and tasked with delivering an impromptu speech to the Pesantren community. Despite feeling unprepared, he embraced the challenge, demonstrating resilience and adaptability—qualities essential for effective teaching in unfamiliar contexts. Such experiences underscore the importance of leadership and communication skills, as highlighted by Gallant and Mayer (2012), who argued that international practicums foster the development of these competencies through real-world challenges.

The teaching component of ITPs allows pre-service teachers to apply pedagogical theories in practice. Involvement in teaching subjects like Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and Mathematics provides valuable insights, underscoring the importance of flexibility in meeting diverse curricular demands. This can be found in Muh Mustakim (2021), which explains the flexibility in developing learning strategies that can accommodate changes and innovations in learning at Pesantren without losing its identity as a traditional Islamic educational institution. On the other hand, this adaptability is crucial for pre-service teachers navigating supply when teaching Pesantren environments, as it enhances their ability to address diverse educational challenges. Li and Peng (2024) argue that exposure to multidisciplinary teaching environments during practicums enhances problem-solving skills, preparing teachers for varied educational contexts. In addition, developing interpersonal relationships with students, mentors, and peers is another critical aspect of the ITP experience. Setyaningsih et al. (2023) highlight the importance of open communication and mutual respect in diverse teaching teams to build cohesive working relationships. Positive rapport with students, alongside occasional miscommunications with mentors and peers, reflects the complexities of collaboration in multicultural settings.

The culmination of the ITP program often brings a sense of achievement and reflection. The experience not only enhances teaching competencies but also deepens understanding of different cultures and educational systems. Marzulina et al. (2021) note that international practicums offer a blend of professional and personal growth opportunities for pre-service teachers, contributing significantly to self-efficacy and long-term career aspirations. In summary, the ITP program encapsulates the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of teaching English as a foreign language in diverse contexts. Through these experiences, this study contributes to the literature on international practicums, highlighting their role in shaping globally competent educators. Documenting the lived experiences of pre-service teachers offers valuable insights for future participants, educators, and policymakers aiming to enhance international teaching programs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on international teaching practicum (ITP) programs has grown significantly in recent years, reflecting the increasing importance of cross-cultural teaching experiences in shaping globally competent educators. This section reviews relevant studies, focusing on the benefits, challenges, and outcomes of ITP programs, particularly for pre-service English teachers. Additionally, it highlights gaps in the existing literature and underscores the unique contributions of this study.

ITP programs provide pre-service teachers with a unique platform to enhance their professional and personal development. Research by Kolb (1984) emphasizes that learning is a cyclical process derived from direct experiences, where individuals engage in concrete experiences, reflect on those experiences, conceptualize abstract theories, and actively experiment with new approaches. This framework aligns closely with the structure of ITP programs, as pre-service teachers are placed in real-world teaching environments, prompting them to learn through active engagement and reflective practices. For instance, pre-service teachers teaching in culturally diverse settings develop adaptive strategies by reflecting on their challenges and successes, as noted in the work of Li &

Peng (2024). These programs encourage teachers to integrate innovative strategies that cater to multicultural student needs. Similarly, Lestari et al. (2024) highlight the role of ITPs in fostering cultural competence. Exposure to different cultural and educational systems allows pre-service teachers to better understand global educational practices and adapt to varied pedagogical frameworks.

Despite the numerous benefits, ITP programs pose significant challenges for participants, particularly during their teaching practicum experiences. Santos (2023) notes that pre-service teachers often struggle with cultural adjustment and language barriers, particularly in settings where the cultural norms and teaching practices differ substantially from their own. These challenges require participants to develop resilience and problem-solving skills. Rață et al. (2022) highlight time management as another important issue, particularly in balancing lesson planning, instructional delivery, and adapting to classroom conditions within the allocated timeframe. Moreover, in the scope of Islamic boarding schools, there are certainly many activities that must be done besides teaching in class, which makes it more difficult for pre-service teachers to face these challenges during the practicum. This sentiment is echoed by Setyaningsih et al. (2023), who found that pre-service teachers frequently face difficulties in meeting multiple demands during their practicums. Effective organizational skills and support from mentors are essential in overcoming these challenges. Additionally, Marzulina et al. (2021) highlight the emotional demands faced by participants, including managing classroom dynamics while adjusting to new pedagogical expectations.

The outcomes of ITP programs are multifaceted, encompassing both professional growth and personal transformation. Research by Orlova and Kamenická (2024) suggests that participants gain valuable insights into global educational trends and develop a broader perspective on teaching practices. Moreover, these experiences often lead to enhanced self-efficacy and long-term career aspirations. Marzulina et al. (2021) highlight the transformative impact of ITP programs on pre-service teachers' intercultural competence. By navigating diverse classroom environments and engaging with students from various cultural backgrounds, participants cultivate empathy, open-mindedness, and a greater appreciation for diversity. These proceed to align with the findings of Kaur et al. (2021), who emphasize the importance of ITP programs providing significant benefits for pre-service teachers, including increased cultural awareness, development of pedagogical skills, and increased motivation and confidence in teaching in multicultural environments. In addition, the overseas internship experience also helps pre-service teachers adapt to different teaching methods and educational systems, ultimately enriching their professional competence.

While the benefits and challenges of ITP programs have been well-documented, there remains a lack of research focusing on the specific experiences of Indonesian pre-service English teachers. Most studies, such as those by Liskinasih et al. (2020); MacKinnon & Shields (2020); Megawati et al. (2023); Setyaningsih et al. (2023); and Li & Peng (2024), focus on broader international contexts, leaving a gap in understanding the unique challenges and opportunities faced by the participants in these ITP programs. This study addresses the aforementioned research gaps by documenting the lived experiences of an Indonesian pre-service English teacher during an ITP program in Malaysia. By exploring the personal narrative of "Budi," this research provides a nuanced understanding of the

challenges, achievements, and lessons learned. These insights contribute to the growing body of literature on international practicums and offer valuable guidance for future participants and policymakers.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This research aims to learn firsthand about students' experiences while participating in the ITP program in Malaysia and attract other students to participate in similar programs to gain extraordinary experiences. The program has many benefits, such as enhancing cooperation with other countries, providing teaching resources to Pesantren in Malaysia, offering international teaching practicum experiences for prospective English teachers, etc. To achieve this, the study employs a qualitative approach using a narrative inquiry design to explore the experiences of Indonesian English teacher candidates participating in the International Teaching Practicum (ITP). Narrative inquiry is a powerful approach to exploring how individuals make sense of and shape their lives through stories and how this research can provide in-depth insights into human experience across contexts (Clandinin, 2006). That enables the researchers to examine the stories and experiences shared by the participants closely. Using narrative inquiry as research design is the appropriate way to capture his personal experience from the beginning of the program, during the program, and after the program ended.

3.2. Participants of the Study

The participants in this study were seven Students from the 7th semester in the English Language Education Department who joined the ITP program in Malaysia. However, the authors chose to focus on the experiences of one of these seven participants as a representative case study to provide an in-depth exploration of the individual journey and perspectives from within the program. In this data, we used the initials "Budi" as the participant's name to maintain the participant's confidentiality. The authors also obtained permission beforehand to conduct the interview and use the data collected. The reason why the particular Budi was chosen was because his story and experience represented the overall experiences of the 7 students. The participant had prior experience as the leader of his cohort. Not only that, but before joining the ITP program, he underwent several specific tests, such as submitting documents and a Curriculum Vitae (CV), and then he underwent an interview test. As a result, he was selected to participate in the ITP program in Malaysia from among several applicants as the final test before joining the program. Therefore, he received full funding to participate in the program, while the other participants did not go through these stages. The chosen participant was also appointed as the group leader during the ITP activities in Malaysia. Furthermore, he also led the program activities from August 12-24, which the Pesantren in Malaysia organized. These activities lasted for nearly a month, from August 8 to September 3, 2024. He had successfully completed the program and gained an extraordinary experience with his six pre-service teachers.

3.3. Instruments

The main data source for this study was focused on the participant, Budi, who shared his experiences during the International Teaching Practicum program in Malaysia. The authors prepared interview questions related to Budi's experiences during the International Teaching Practicum program in Malaysia. The document contained questions regarding the participant's background, motivation for joining the program, challenges faced, relationships with mentors/Ustadz, fellow teachers, and students there, and the learnings obtained by the participant Budi during the program. After the data has been collected, the researchers will analyze the narrative from the interview transcripts with Budi as well as other documentation obtained during the program, divided into three stages: Preparation for The ITP Program, During The Program, and opinion after the ITP program. The focus of this research is to understand Budi's journey during his participation in the international teaching program.

3.4. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis will be conducted using a Thematic analysis approach by (Braun & Clarke (2006) to explore the narrative participant's experiences during the International Teaching Practicum program. Data analysis will be conducted using an in-depth analysis of the narrative data with a six-step approach: First, the authors will familiarize themselves with the data by carefully reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to gain a thorough understanding of the participant's experiences. Second, the authors will identify and extract key themes and patterns that emerge from the narrative data. This will involve carefully coding and categorizing the information provided by the participant. Third, the authors will then construct a detailed chronological account of the participant's journey, tracing their experiences from the preparation stage through the ITP program and in the aftermath. Fourth, the authors will carefully analyze and interpret the participant's narratives, seeking to uncover the underlying meanings, motivations, and significances of their experiences. Fifth, the authors will contextualize the participant's experiences within the broader social, cultural, and educational frameworks in which the ITP program was situated. Finally, the authors will synthesize the findings into a cohesive and insightful narrative that captures the essence of the participant's journey and contributes to the understanding of Indonesian English pre-service teachers' experiences in international teaching practice.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Preparation for the ITP Program

The participant, Budi, described his experience during the ITP program in Malaysia as thoroughly transformative and rewarding. In the first stage, the author asks about Budi's motivation for joining the ITP program. Budi expressed his strong desire to gain international teaching experience and to know cross- culture in different countries. he is very excited about this opportunity because it is very rare for Indonesian students to have the chance to practice teaching in another country, especially in a Pesantren setting. He explained that the reason why he chose to apply for the ITP program was not only because he wanted to improve his knowledge but also because he wanted to experience living and teaching in a different cultural context. He has three motivations for joining this program, as he states:

“My motivation for participating in this activity was first to fulfill my need during this college period to complete PBLI and KSM, or what was previously called PPL and KKN. The second is the opportunity to be able to go out of one's own country or explore abroad, even though it could be said to be close, not too far from Indonesia to Malaysia. Lastly, to add to my experience and knowledge of the outside world. How to go abroad, how to teach in a different environment, how to adapt there, how to socialize, and how to find out about other people's cultures so that I'm open-minded.”

The reasons he joined the program were to gain international teaching experience, expand his knowledge and understanding of foreign cultures and education systems, and fulfill the final semester requirements of his study program. He also enjoyed the prospect of new experiences that would have a positive impact on him. Initially, he had some doubts about participating because he was not very confident in passing the selection process that had been prepared. However, with support from his surrounding environment and close friends, he eventually mustered the courage to apply for the ITP program. If he passed the selection, he would have the opportunity to receive full funding from the organizers. The registration was free, and the organizers only provided 2 fully funded slots, so he did not want to miss this chance. During the preparation process leading up to the ITP program implementation, Budi underwent several selection stages, including document submission, interviews, and tests. In the initial stage, Budi had to prepare the required documents such as a CV, certificates, passport photos, and other documents.

Then, Budi also had to undergo an interview conducted by the organizers. As he explained during the interview with the author:

“The university organized an ITP program that was shared in the English education department group. The requirements for participating in the program were to submit a TOEFL score. Specifically, English department students had to achieve a score of at least 500. This was followed by submitting personal documents such as a CV, passport photos, and other documents. After passing the document selection, the next step was an interview that had been scheduled. Alhamdulillah, I was one of the candidates selected to receive full funding from the several participants who registered for the ITP program. Then, for the preparation I did, it was not much, one of which was to see what the interview would be like. I had previously participated in a UKM interview, but it was not as formal as this one, and in reality, my answers at that time were still lacking in my opinion. And in this case, I had never participated in an interview that was 100% in English. To prepare the documents and the interview, I used the 2-3 weeks given to me as optimally as possible”.

After passing the selection stage, several participants joined the program but did not receive full funding from the committee, as only 2 people received full funding. Budi was very grateful to be selected as one of the recipients of full funding from this program. Budi and his friends were then asked to participate in several activities and meetings with lecturers and classmates to prepare before departing for Malaysia. These preparations included coordinating with lecturers to learn the schedule at the Malaysian Pesantren and preparing learning modules and teaching materials to be used. Budi and his friends also prepared their passports and purchased round-trip airline tickets. They also did not forget to prepare the work program that would be carried out during their time in Malaysia. These preparation activities were carried out for 2 months before departure.

4.2. During The ITP program in Malaysia

When Budi and his friends first arrived at the Malaysian Pesantren, they were warmly welcomed by the Pesantren staff. Budi was surprised to be appointed as the leader of the ITP participant group, as he was seen to have good leadership and English language skills. On the first night, specifically on Friday, September 9th, Budi also gave a speech to the students there. The following day, Budi was appointed again to be the leader for the August 17-31 competition event, which was to commemorate Indonesian and Malaysian independence. Because of the many activities organized by the Pesantren during the ITP program in Malaysia, it became an obstacle for their teaching practice activities at the school. The competition event closed the school for over 2 weeks, from August 12 to 24. Even so, Budi and the group could still carry out the work program they had prepared beforehand, including the English Camp. Budi described his experience in the first and second weeks of the actual ITP program in Malaysia as follows:

“For my experience during the ITP program in the first 2 weeks, I divide it into 2 parts. In the first week, there are many surprises, especially for me personally because I am appointed as the group leader sent to Malaysia. Then, on Saturday night, precisely on the 9th, when I arrive at the boarding school, I am also appointed to give a speech without any preparation. I feel unready at that time, but I still give the speech to the best of my ability. Two days later, at the boarding school, they plan to hold an event combining the August 17th and August 31st competitions to commemorate Indonesian and Malaysian independence. This suspends academic activities for 2 weeks. I am appointed as the chairman again to manage the competition. Because of this, my teaching experience, especially in academics, is delayed for approximately 2 weeks as the event runs from August 12–24, 2024. The competition includes non-academic and academic activities from morning to evening, while the evening is filled with Pondok activities. However, the schedule often changes due to weather conditions and unexpected events. Additionally, my friends and I act as judges in the competitions and committees for both academic and non-academic activities during the event. Alongside the event, my friends and I run our work program, the English Camp (EC), following a schedule approved by the Pondok. The EC takes place in the morning after dawn and at night after reading sessions, specifically from 6:00–7:30 am and 11:00–12:00 pm. Although I do not teach much in EC activities, I help my friends carry out their duties, such as documenting and preparing the tools they need for teaching. When I or my friends get the opportunity to teach during EC, it is very exciting, even though the students sometimes feel a bit sleepy”.

After the two-week Indonesian and Malaysian independence competition event at the Malaysian Pesantren, specifically, 3-4 weeks later, Budi and his friends began conducting their teaching practice activities at the school. Although the independence competition event temporarily suspended the school's schedule, in the following weeks, Budi and his friends could carry out their teaching practice activities and implement other programs they had brought with them previously. However, in reality, they faced many obstacles and challenges when teaching at the Pesantren, as Budi described:

“For the activities in weeks 3 to 4, there are ups and downs—sometimes the activities run smoothly, and other times they do not. This is influenced by the weather and frequent late-night meetings that often go until 1–3 a.m., causing delays in waking up in the morning. As a result, EC activities are occasionally canceled or not conducted as planned. Sometimes,

evening schedules are replaced by other activities, making the EC program less than 100% effective compared to the initial plan. As for other programs, some were implemented early, such as creating vocabulary and expression books before our departure. Other programs, like reviving the bulletin board, putting up vocabulary banners, and similar activities, were completed in week 4. On the teaching side, I only had one opportunity to teach English in the classroom (school). Due to the school's schedule, I spent more time teaching ICT and Mathematics, though it was only twice. The short duration of the program—just one month—further limited teaching opportunities, as two weeks were allocated to competitions and other events”.

Despite the many challenges faced by Budi and his friends during the ITP program, they still managed to carry out the programs they had created very well. Although what they had planned initially did not match the reality on the ground, and they felt slightly dissatisfied because they only had one opportunity to teach English in particular, all the programs that Budi and his friends brought could still be implemented during the ITP program, despite the several obstacles explained by Budi. Overall, the ITP experience at the Malaysian Pesantren provided valuable lessons for Budi and his friends to become even better English teachers in the future.

4.3. Opinion After the ITP Program (participant reflection)

During the 1-month program, Budi felt less close with the mentors/Ustadz and some of his fellow teacher friends due to several factors. For example, when activities did not go as planned, Budi felt guilty about the mentors/Ustadz there. Budi also felt less close with some fellow teachers because when discussing, some of them were unwilling to give opinions or feedback if a decision Budi made was less appropriate. They would just remain silent or even discuss their disagreement behind his back, as Budi said:

“I feel closer to the students rather than the mentors or even my own friends. This is because I enjoy communicating with the students. I feel less close to the mentors because, when I try my best to carry out what we promise to bring there, the reality is that there are still some shortcomings. This creates a sense of uneasiness or guilt in my mind for the less-than-optimal activities. As for my fellow teaching friends, there are some internal issues. Most of my friends, if there is a problem or if I make a less appropriate decision, just remain silent and do not discuss it directly with me. I do not know exactly why they act like that. Perhaps it is my fault for not being active enough in encouraging them to share or provide suggestions. Even though I previously give them the opportunity to share any problems, the reality is that some of them still choose to remain silent. So, I do not know what is on their minds because I cannot read their thoughts”.

Budi felt closer to the student friends than to the mentors/Ustadz and some fellow ITP teacher friends. However, Budi took lessons to improve communication going forward and learn to be more open to fellow friends and mentors/Ustadz. At the end of this ITP program, Budi and his friends felt sad because they had to part ways with the students they had known for one month at the Malaysian Pesantren. Although it seemed only brief, there were many memorable moments for Budi and his friends who participated in the program. Budi said that:

"The most memorable moment during the ITP program is riding on an airplane. It is my first experience taking a flight. As someone who enjoys new experiences that have a positive impact, I find this very enjoyable. Additionally, I meet amazing students who have interesting and polite characteristics. I am also gaining new knowledge, learning about Malaysian culture, trying the local cuisines, seeing the beaches, and even riding a motorcycle abroad. These are all remarkable and pleasant experiences for me. Furthermore, I am developing many new skills during the ITP program, including gaining knowledge and learning how to become a better leader. These experiences are shaping my growth, and I look forward to applying everything I have learned in the future".

Budi felt he had developed greatly during the ITP program at the Malaysian Pesantren in terms of leadership, socialization skills, and other abilities. The various challenges they faced during the ITP program made Budi and his friends stronger in dealing with unexpected situations in the future. Budi also provided some advice for students or other participants who want to participate in the ITP program in the future, as he said:

"My advice for future ITP program participants is to prepare yourself mentally and do not hesitate to express or speak up when there are differences of opinion. Prepare well-developed materials, prepare good work programs, be more diligent than usual, do not worry too much, carry it out as best as possible, and lastly, be more proactive and do not wait for orders from either members or the leader".

That is how the journey of Budi and his friends during the ITP program at the Malaysian Pesantren came to an end. Budi also provided very valuable advice for future program participants based on the experiences he had gained.

5. DISCUSSION

The research paper has provided an in-depth understanding of the experiences and learning that Indonesian pre-service English teachers gained during an international teaching practicum program in a Malaysian Pesantren. By exploring the personal narrative of one pre-service teacher named Budi, the paper has highlighted the various events of the journey and how they shaped his development as an aspiring educator. Although it only analyzes one pre-service teacher, Budi had a significant influence on the ITP activities when they were taking place. This is evidenced by his decision to implement the program to become a better educator. This research can help provide an overview of the journey of prospective English teachers during the ITP program in Malaysian Pesantren and the learning they gain while undergoing the international teaching practicum training.

The research findings reveal that the ITP program in Malaysia provided valuable lessons for Budi and his fellow pre-service teachers. They gained new knowledge, skills, and insights that can help them grow professionally to practice their teaching and their social interaction abilities with students and other teachers. Specifically, the pre-service teachers developed their leadership skills, communication abilities, and cross-cultural awareness - all of which are crucial for their future as English teachers. Practicing practical teaching skills in a different cultural context and Pesantren environment, which has many activities, can make Budi and his friends more aware of taking care of students and managing time because of the dense schedules given by the Pesantren authorities.

The previous study (Habibi et al., 2018; Marzulina et al., 2021) also discussed teaching in Pesantren, Indonesia but did not specifically focus on the pre-service teachers' experiences during an international teaching practicum in Malaysia. This study fills that gap by examining the personal account and insights of one Indonesian pre-service English teacher. On the other hand, there are many researchers who have examined the learning outcomes of pre-service teachers during international teaching practicum (Kabilan et al., 2017; Williams, 2019; Kaur et al., 2021; Megawati et al., 2023; Pakpahan, 2023), also described the challenges and strategies during the ITP program. By combining these two aspects, the paper aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the journey of Indonesian English Pre-service teachers during teaching practicum in Malaysia.

The findings from the present study align with previous research on the benefits of international teaching practicums for pre-service teachers. The finding by Sulaiman and Ismail (2020) found that teacher competencies cover personal character, pedagogy, professionalism, information and communication technology (ICT) and recommend strengthening teacher training programs and institutional support to ensure more innovative and relevant education in the modern era. Similarly, this study found that Budi developed various skills and experiences, including leadership, socialization, and other essential abilities that will shape his future growth as an educator. Moreover, the study's finding resonates with the research of Williams (2019) and Jin, Parr, et al. (2020), who convey that the benefits of ITP include developing teaching skills and cross-cultural understanding, which lead to international professional experiences for pre-service teachers. The other study focuses on challenges faced by Indonesian pre-service teachers, such as issues related to student characteristics, language proficiency, classroom management, and cultural shock, which corroborate the findings of a previous study by (Liskinasih et al., 2020). However, this present study provides a more in-depth exploration of the personal journey of one individual, which offers a richer understanding of the nuances of the ITP experience.

One limitation of this research is that it only analyzed the experiences of one Indonesian pre-service English teacher during the ITP program in Malaysian Pesantren. Future research could explore the experiences of more Indonesian pre-service English teachers who participated in the ITP program in Malaysian Pesantren to provide a more comprehensive overview. This is because the program is highly popular and will continue in the future. Overall, this research provides an in-depth understanding of the experiences and learning gained by Indonesian pre-service English teachers during their international teaching practicum program in Malaysian Pesantren. These findings can contribute to the design and development of more effective international teaching practicum programs to better prepare prospective Indonesian English teachers to face challenges in the global education world.

6. CONCLUSION

This study provides an in-depth exploration of the journey and learning experiences of an Indonesian pre-service English teacher, Budi, during an international teaching practicum program in a Malaysian Pesantren. The personal narrative highlights how Budi's experiences in preparation during the ITP program and his opinion after the program contributed to his professional development as an aspiring educator. The findings reveal that Budi gained various skills and experiences, such as leadership, socialization, cultural

understanding, and reflective practice, through his participation in the ITP program. This research offers valuable insights into the potential benefits of international teaching practicums for pre-service teachers. It can inform the design and implementation of effective programs to prepare Indonesian English teacher candidates for the global education landscape. Hopefully, this study can provide a basis for future research to investigate further the experiences of Indonesian pre-service English teachers in international teaching practicum programs.

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