



## INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCED BY UMM STUDENTS

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### Abstrak

Para pendidik mempunyai tanggungjawab untuk mempersiapkan siswa dalam menghadapi globalisasi. Dalam rangka untuk mengekspos siswa dengan isu global tersebut, akademisi menggeser pembelajaran dari yang ada di kelas menjadi *service learning*. Magang internasional yang menjadi topik dalam penelitian ini memberikan peluang untuk siswa terlibat dalam *service learning* dalam konteks yang lebih luas. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui hambatan yang dialami para siswa ketika mereka terlibat dalam magang Internasional di Thailand 2015 silam. Penelitian kualitatif ini mengambil data dari sepuluh mahasiswa yang mengikuti program tersebut dengan *instrument kuesioner* dan *interview*. Hasil penelitian ini menyebutkan bahwa tantangan yang dialami para siswa ketika magang beragam beragam dari visa, sakit, bahasa, makanan, kendala keagamaan, kendala pengajaran, kendala sosial, kendala pengumpulan data.dan

**Kata kunci :** *service learning*, magang internasional

### Abstract

*It is a great task for educators to prepare students for globalised world. For the purpose to expose students with global issues such as social justice, development and sustainability, academics have moved the boundaries of learning from the classroom with service learning. International internship, in this present study, is an opportunity to conduct service learning in a broader context. This paper presents a description and evaluation of an authentic form of service learning through International Internship managed by Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, University of Muhammadiyah Malang. In detail, the study is intended to examine the challenges faced by the interns abroad and identify the possible solutions for each challenge during the implementation of the program. Executed with qualitative method, the data will be collected from 10 English department students who have involved in the 2015 International Internship in Thailand. The result, in accordance to that, was analyzed through questionnaire and interview that reflects the students' perspectives about the program. The findings revealed that the challenges experienced by the interns are regarding visa, sickness, language, food, religion, teaching, social and data mining.*

**Keyword:** *international internship, service learning, challenges*

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### BACKGROUND

Service learning is important method which enables students to experience meaningful learning so that they can link practice and academic. In the context of

University of Muhammadiyah Malang, internship program as one method of service learning is designed to bring benefits to three components, such as students, institution as the agencies, and faculty of teacher training



and education as the organizer. Students, as the main actors of the program, also improved their identity as from the program (Nghia & Tai, 2017)

Although some advantages are recognized in the service learning, there are barriers in the implementation of this program. Researchers such as McCarthy & Tucker, 1999; Rosing et al, 2010; Macchio & Voorhies, 2012 identified barriers such as the lack of communication with agent, access and time management. The previous study conducted by the researcher focusing on the implementation of intership program in 2015 indicated some challenges found in the program in regards to the time, the management, and the task, the supervisors' unavailability, hospitality, and the access to the agent.

Given that University of Muhammadiyah Malang is passionate to build international atmosphere in the campus, the implementation of international internship play significant role in the internationalization process. This study, in line with it, focused on the challenges in service learning experienced by students involved in International Internship program managed by Faculty of Teacher Training and Education in 2015.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Service learning**

Focusing on pedagogical context, service learning is defined as “powerful, experiential learning events can provide preservice teachers with the opportunity to learn about diversity and challenge their preconceived ideas about various cultural issues (Wong, 2008). It is the action inspired by Dewey (1939) who proposed a service-oriented action that connect the learning content with the real life (Ramsaroop & Ramdhani, 2014).

### **International Internship**

Over the last decade, the growing interest of having international exposure has increased beyond the geographical and topical boundaries (Nelson & Klak, 2012). International Service Learning, in accordance to that, has been conducted in colleges and universities (Nichols, Rothenberg, Moshi & Tetloff, 2013; Carbtree, 2011, in Guseh 2015).

International Service Learning is defined in some points of view. It is a well-managed pedagogical experience that addressed the issues in the overseas communities by doing direct interaction and cross-cultural activities which is reflected to improve individuals' understanding on the course content and their academic and civic engagement (Bringle & Hatcher, 2011).



In University of Muhammadiyah Malang, particularly in Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, internship program is designed as the opportunity for students to experience service learning. The internship program is conducted in the home country and abroad with different approach. The overseas program, in addition, is implemented since 2015 to expose the students with international atmosphere.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed qualitative method. In addition, descriptive study is chosen as the research is intended to depict the authentic implementation of 2015 International Internship program.

The research collected the data from students who have participated in 2015 International Internship program administered by Faculty of Teacher Training and Education.

This present study used two research instruments. The first, questionnaire will be employed in order to identify challenges in various perspectives. Secondly, interview will be conducted as one of instrument for the purpose to gain further information about challenges in internship program they have experienced. Semi-structured interview was

employed in the study to have a clear description from research subjects.

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

There are eight challenges in the implementation of International Internship 2015 administered by Faculty of Teacher Training and Education. The challenges were elaborated as follows:

### **Visa was granted only for two weeks**

As the program was conducted overseas, visa is an important document for the interns to join the program. In this case, all of them were granted only two weeks to stay within the country because they traveled from Kuala Lumpur by train. The reason why they chose this was because they want to travel at the cheapest cost. They did not know that this would affect their visa. In Thailand especially the cities where they run the program, visa is regularly checked by officials the cities are conflict zones. The following excerpt support the idea:

‘I had only 2 weeks visa and I did not know that until the officials at the border told me so. It was shocking and worrying, because the internship program supposed to run for a month long. In South Thailand, visa is checked frequently in the border.’



## 1. Sickness

Interns also faced obstacle regarding with health during the International internship 2015 which was conducted in some cities in Thailand. Three interns who had the learning experience in Thailand mentioned that they had to deal with different climate, as it was hot. Some students do not see this as a challenge, but there are students who got sick during the process because they were dehydrated. They mentioned in the interview:

‘It was very hot in Thailand, so I got dehydrated and dizzy.’

## 2. Language barrier

Interns involved in international program 2015 stated that they experienced issue regarding language. English as International language was spoken only with certain people like teacher particularly English teacher, and principal. Language becomes matter in the International Intership 2015 because interns find difficulties to interact with locals using the same language. People in some parts in Thailand use Thai language, and some use Malay. Although Bahasa Indonesia is similar to Malay, but interns participated in the program do not really familiar with Malay and they had to struggle to communicate with locals. They mentioned in the interview:

‘It was hard to talk to the local people in the same language. I talked in English but they do not really understand, they said in Thai but I could not understand. When they use Malay, I can understand a bit.’

## 3. Food

The fourth challenge mentioned by interns is regarding the food. Deeply elaborated in the interview, they stated that they had a problem in eating the food served by the host. Thai cuisine which is mainly sour and spicy is a completely a new taste for some interns. They had a problem with this at the beginning because they do not use to eat the type of dish. They mentioned in the interview:

‘I need to eat sour and spicy food everyday. I did not like it, it makes my tummy ache.’

## 4. Religious issue

There are three challenges faced by interns regarding religious activity. The first challenge that stated by interns in regards to religion is they are demanded to pray and cite Al Qur’an together. They were asked by the host to do these in an Islamic boarding house, which they lived in. The interns tried to accept this as one of the routines they have in the program. One of the interns admitted:



‘I was asked to pray together and then recite Al Qur’an afterwards at the mosque. It was hard at the beginning because I do not used to do this as my habit.’

The second challenge in this field is concerning the praying time. In another part of Thailand, the interns mentioned that it was difficult to know the praying time. This is because Islam in this area is a minority, so there are only few mosques, which are far from the place they lived. The view is highlighted in the following excerpt:

‘I did not know when should I pray because the place where I lived was far from mosque.’

Third, it was difficult to find halal food, which challenged them to find places to eat out. The food served on the street is not always halal, so it worried them. One of the interns commented:

‘To find halal food when we are outside could be tricky, as not all of the food is halal, so we need to be careful.’

## 5. Teaching problem

In international internship conducted in 2015, interns are required to teach in Thai schools, teaching Bahasa Indonesia and English. The teaching issue that they face occurred in two points: teaching schedule and

the teaching materials. First, teaching schedule becomes the issue because the interns expected that they have their teaching practice soon after they arrived in Thailand. In reality, it took two weeks for the interns to have the practice teaching. It was because the school was in holiday and the school started two weeks later. In order to handle the issue, interns tried to spend their time knowing the school. They explored the school to know the school culture well. In addition, they spent the two weeks helping the school in administrative matters. At that time, the school ran a workshop for teachers and the interns helped them to organize the event. They mentioned in the interview:

‘We came not at the perfect time, since it was holiday. So we spent two weeks to explore the place and to know the people. We were requested to assist the school committee to run a workshop for teachers.’

The second issue that the interns have is the teaching materials that need to be adjusted. They mentioned that they taught English and Bahasa Indonesia for the students. Although they have prepared the materials they need to deliver the lesson, the adjustment needed was beyond their expectations. For example, interns need to use sign language to



communicate with students, which makes the language classroom less effective. In addition to that, the interns also faced difficulties to set up materials that the students can understand because their language skill level is low. One of the interns commented:

‘I found difficulties in selecting appropriate materials for my students. Although I have prepared the materials from home, the challenge is to match the material with the students’ level.’

## 6. Social issue

The next problem that interns faced during the implementation of International Internship 2015 was regarding social, particularly their relation with their peers. One of the interns mentioned that she had a personal problem with her friend in the same group, so they could not get along together well. She added:

‘I had a problem with my roommate and it was personal problem. I did not know why exactly, but I could not be friend like who I used to be.’

## 7. Data mining

The other issue that is faced by the interns is regarding the students’ responsibility to write a report in which required them to gain data from the school. In this case, data that they got was written in Thai

language, and some of them were written in Thai letters, which complicate the process. They mentioned in the interview:

‘It was shocking to know that documents from the school that we need for the report is written in Thai letters. We could not even read them.’

## CONCLUSION

International internship is believed to bring positive advantages for students in many elements. As reported by Holsaple (2012), interns engaged in internship program would be more tolerant in the society, especially when they had to deal with differences. In international program, internship conducted by students would face some obstacles, which was resulted from different things occurred in different setting. The analysis indicated that students face difficulties in many aspects including visa, social, cultural, religious and student’s responsibilities. The present study is quite similar with the result of Rusu, Copaci, and Soos (2015) who particularly highlighted changes of attitudes, skills and efficacy.

The obstacles they faced in the internship have transformed their attitudes, skills and efficacy so that they become more adaptable person with multi skills they need in the real life. In other words, Gonzalez-Carriedo and Nava



(2017) reported that the International exposure to bring transformation to the students particularly to be open and global minded.

Interestingly, lesson learned from the implementation of International Internship in 2015 is flexibility particularly when interns need to engage in social and educational activities. In this regards, the interns need to be flexible in their communication that sometimes they use English, Malay or even sign language. The same experience also occurred in educational setting in which the interns need to teach student at Thai school. McElwain et al. (2016) also mentioned that flexibility is inevitable in service learning. They further stated that interns were challenged to adapt to any changes in school setting. In addition to that, Marx and Moss (2015) also identified the challenges that could shape the students' understanding beyond socio-cultural dimensions.

## SUGGESTIONS

This paper investigated the challenges experienced by students engaged in International internship conducted in 2015. Results suggested that any institution that provide and manage the implementation of International Internship need to be aware of the challenge experienced by interns in the

destination country in order to limit the ineffectiveness of the program.

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