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## OPTIMIZE SEA TEACHER PROGRAM: INCREASING ECONOMIC EDUCATION STUDENTS PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATONAL TEACHING

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### Abstrak

SEA Teacher merupakan program pengalaman mengajar lintas negara bagi mahasiswa calon guru di Asia Tenggara. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengoptimalkan keikutsertaan mahasiswa Pendidikan Ekonomi Universitas Jambi dalam Program SEA Teacher dengan meningkatkan pemahaman dan minat mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan survei kuantitatif yang melibatkan 31 mahasiswa Pendidikan Ekonomi angkatan 2023. Data dikumpulkan dengan menggunakan kuesioner berskala Likert untuk mengukur tingkat pemahaman dan minat mahasiswa setelah kegiatan sosialisasi program SEA Teacher. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa 89% peserta menunjukkan pemahaman yang sangat baik terhadap program ini, sementara 77% menunjukkan minat yang baik untuk berpartisipasi. Faktor utama yang mendorong pemahaman adalah penyampaian materi yang relevan dan testimoni dari alumni program SEA Teacher. Peningkatan pemahaman dan minat ini diharapkan dapat meningkatkan keikutsertaan mahasiswa Pendidikan Ekonomi dalam Program SEA Teacher yang bermanfaat bagi pengembangan kompetensi profesional dan wawasan internasional mereka.

**Kata Kunci:** *Sea Teacher, Pendidikan Ekonomi, Pertukaran Internasional, Partisipasi Mahasiswa, Sosialisasi Program.*

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### Abstract

*SEA Teacher is a cross-country teaching experience program for student teachers in Southeast Asia. This study aims to optimize the participation of Jambi University Economics Education students in the SEA Teacher Program by increasing their understanding and interest. This study used a quantitative survey approach involving 31 Economics Education students 2023 class. Data was collected using a Likert scale questionnaire to measure the level of understanding and interest of students after the SEA Teacher program socialization activities. The results showed that 89% of participants showed a very good understanding of the program, while 77% showed a good interest in participating. Key factors encourage understanding is delivery of relevant material and testimonials from SEA Teacher program alumni. This increase in understanding and interest is expected to increase the participation of Economics Education students in the SEA Teacher Program, which is beneficial for the development of their professional competencies and international horizons.*



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**Keywords:** *Sea Teacher, Economic Education, International Exchange, Student Participation, Program Socialization*

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## INTRODUCTION

The SEA Teacher Program (Southeast Asian Teacher Project) is an initiative that aims to provide opportunities for student teachers in the Southeast Asian region to gain cross-border teaching experience (practicum) ([seateacher.seameo.org](http://seateacher.seameo.org)). Under the auspices of SEAMEO (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization), the program provides education students with the opportunity to teach in neighboring Southeast Asian schools, providing a unique experience that brings together education with cultural exchange.

Through the SEA Teacher program, students are not only placed as teachers, but also learn first-hand from other countries' education systems. They can experience the challenges of teaching in a different environment, understand diverse curricula, and interact with students from other cultures. The experience enriches their horizons and hones their adaptability in an international environment. This is particularly important for 21st century teachers as they need to prepare for a globalized world by having international competencies and cross-cultural understanding (Zhao, 2010). This includes technological skills and global understanding that are relevant for prospective teachers (National Education Standards Agency, 2021). In addition, the

benefits that will be obtained by students who participate in this activity are improving pedagogical skills, English language skills, socializing with students from different countries, providing opportunities for students to see the world (Sunardi, 2024). Teaching skills will have a significant impact when students take part in the Sea Teacher program (Widyasati and Kumyai, 2019). Participating in an international teaching program will improve communication skills, confidence and teaching skills, interpersonal skills, new views on education and learning new cultures (Kabilan's, 2013).

The SEA Teacher Program is one of the important programs that provides opportunities for Jambi University students to improve their quality. Participation in this program not only improves students' academic abilities and soft skills, but also has a strategic impact on the accreditation of study programs (Prodi) and the achievement of the Main Performance Indicators (IKU) of universities.

One of the study programs at Jambi University, namely the Economics Education Study Program, has been actively participating since 2018 in the SEA Teacher program, but there are still many Jambi University Economics Education students who do not fully understand the benefits and opportunities offered by the SEA Teacher program. Some students have heard

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about this program, but the information they get is not clear or detailed enough. The limited information can be in the form of a lack of understanding of registration procedures, requirements, long-term benefits, and experiences that can be gained while participating in this program. Whereas as a prospective teacher, economics education students are also required to have experience and broaden international horizons. However, in the process, economic education students still have several obstacles, based on the results of the author's initial observations, the obstacles found are very limited information about this program, the requirements that must be completed, language and teaching skills, mentally and emotionally unprepared. In addition, based on existing data, economic education students are still very few to participate in this program, even though this program is opened every year except during a pandemic. The following is data on student participation, including:

Table 1. Participation Data

Years	Batch	Number of Applicants	Economic Education Registrants	Quota Received	Accepted from Economic Education
2018	5	6	3	6	3
	6	10	1	7	1
2019	7	9	-	7	-
	8	4	1	4	1
2023	9	10	2	10	2
2024	10	10	1	10	1

Source: International Office Universitas Jambi

Based on the data above, it shows that the number of applicants from economic education is still relatively small, even though the Jambi University International Office targets each batch of applicants for each study program, namely 5 students. To overcome the lack of participation of economic education students, it is necessary to "Optimize the Sea Teacher Program: Increasing the Participation of Economic Education Students in Participating in International Teaching Exchanges". This study aims to see the level of understanding and student interest in the Sea Teacher Program through targeted and effective socialization activities to increase the participation of Economic Education students in participating in international teaching exchange programs.

## METHODS

### Research design

This study uses a quantitative method with a survey approach where data is collected from respondents to describe or measure certain conditions or phenomena used to analyze the level of understanding and interest of economics education students in following the Sea Teacher program.

## Participants

A total of 31 Jambi University economics education study program students class of 2023 participated in a series of Sea Teacher program socialization seminars to increase understanding and interest in this program.

## Instruments and procedurs

The research instrument was a questionnaire administered directly to the participants using a G-form with a Linkert Scale designed to measure students' understanding and interest in the Sea Teacher program. Students' understanding includes things such as the purpose of the program, registration procedures, benefits obtained, and the countries involved in the program. In addition, student interest includes things such as interest and motivation, plans to join the program, self-preparation and the desire to learn about the culture and education system of the country concerned.

## Data analysis

The data collected from the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively using descriptive statistics to see the answers from the students regarding their understanding and interest in the Sea Teacher program which will be calculated and interpreted. The results of this analysis will provide an overview of how well students understand the program and the extent to which they are interested in following it. The following are the criteria for assessing the results of data analysis, namely:

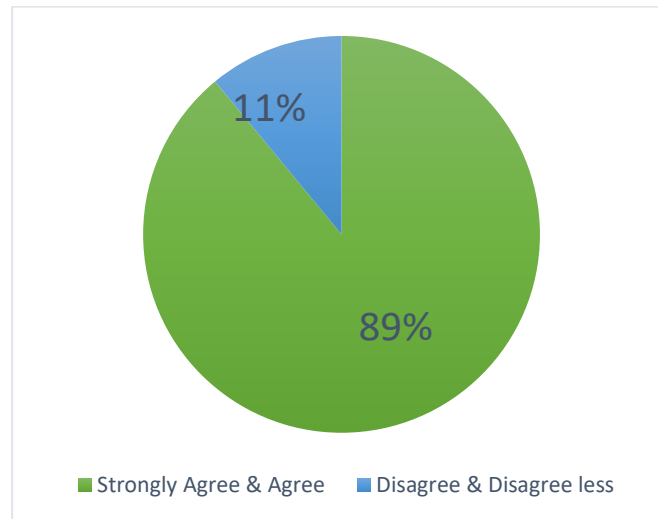
Table 2. Assessment Criteria

No	Presentation	Criteria
1	81 – 100%	Very Good
2	71 – 80%	Good
3	61 – 70%	Enough
4	51 – 60%	Not Good
5	< 50%	Not Very Good

Source: Modification from Ningsih (2016)

## FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of research on the level of understanding and interest of students in the socialization of the Sea Teacher program show the following data:



Source: Processed questionnaire data

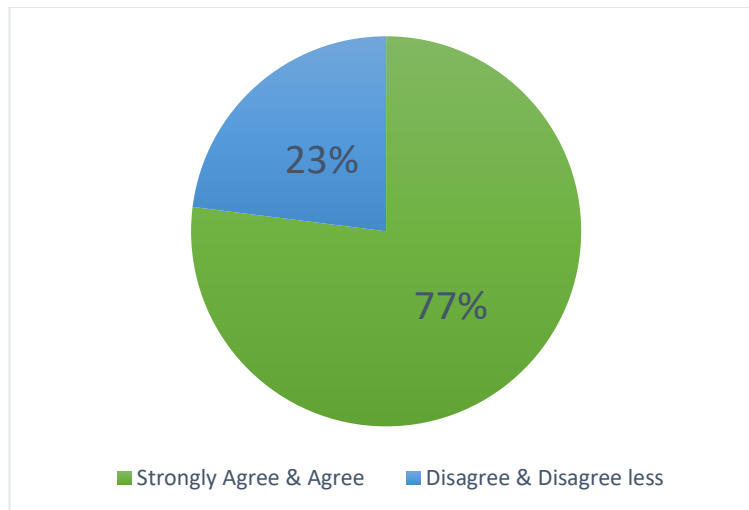
**Figure 1. Level of Understanding**

Based on the results of the analysis of questionnaires that have been distributed to the participants of the socialization activities, data obtained about 89% of the answers Agree and Strongly Agree related to the participants' understanding of the Sea Teacher program, and the remaining 11% for the answers Disagree and Disagree. Thus, the level of understanding of economic education students regarding the Sea Teacher program material has been categorized as very good.

The main factor that encourages students' understanding of this program is the delivery of relevant and detailed materials by the head of the International Office as the organizer of the activity as well as presentations made by alumni of the Sea Teacher program. The material presented was very helpful for students in understanding in depth about this program, from the objectives and benefits to the registration procedures and mechanisms. In addition, presentations made by alumni of the Sea Teacher program also provide a concrete picture of the experience they have gained so that students can more easily visualize the benefits and processes involved in the program. The clear and detailed information and direct testimonials from alumni strengthened students' understanding and increased their trust in the Sea Teacher program. This activity was considered a success for improving students' understanding. According to (Armutcu & Yaman, 2010) in terms of organizing international programs, there are many reasons that encourage institutions to continue partnerships and create international teaching practicum programs, the first and most popular being globalization and the need for competitiveness. It is also important to note that international teaching programs engage prospective teachers in active learning that leads to personal and professional development (Auni et al., 2022).

This is also supported by (Ur, 2000) a prospective teacher should have the opportunity to attend several development courses offered by various institutions at various levels during their career to improve their general professional knowledge and experience. Training for

teachers is essential for the development and success of their professional practice (Farell, 2012). The results of (Knutson and Gonzalez's, 2016) study found that US students who participated in internship programs in China improved their personal and professional competencies. This finding is also relevant to that found in (Robinson et al's, 2017) study.



Source: Processed questionnaire data

**Figure 2. Level of Interest**

Based on the analysis of questionnaires that have been distributed to the participants of the socialization activities, data obtained about 77% of the answers Agree and Strongly Agree related to the participants' interest in the Sea Teacher program, and the remaining 23% for the answers Disagree and Disagree. Thus, the level of interest of economic education students regarding the Sea Teacher program material has been categorized as good.

The main reason that motivates students to join this program is that the SEA Teacher program will provide useful experience for future careers. Benefits such as the opportunity to gain international experience and enrich professional portfolios. This is in line with research conducted (Arquillano, 2022) showing that the Sea Teacher program has a significant positive impact on teaching competence and personal quality improvement which is very beneficial in future professional abilities. The results of research conducted (Auni etc, 2022) also show that the Sea Teacher program has a positive impact on the development of personal, professional and social competencies. This program helps them to be more independent, confident, insightful and ready to face the challenges of the global education world. In addition, the presentation of experiences from inspiring alumni made the participants very interested in participating in the program. The experiences conveyed are provisions and assets for them when they have participated in the Sea Teacher program to continue teaching positions after graduation (Auni etc, 2022). So, this activity is considered successful to increase the participation of economics education students to participate in the opening of the next Sea Teacher program.

By participating in this program, students were able to gain better teaching skills and expand their international network. However, some students also expressed challenges or barriers such as language barriers or the additional costs involved which were enough to influence their decision to participate. Based on the results of follow-up interviews with students who were not interested in participating in this program, it was found that lack of self-confidence in academic and foreign language abilities and lack of support from the surrounding environment such as family were the main factors that influenced the students' low interest. In addition, some students also consider that this program is not a priority because they want to focus more on completing their studies and other academic activities in the country or campus. Nevertheless, they know that there will be many benefits that will be obtained when participating in the Sea Teacher Program.

The results showed that optimizing the Sea Teacher program by conducting socialization to increase the understanding and interest of economic education students to take part in this program can have a positive influence. Through socialization, it ensures that this program can have a broad and maximum impact on both participants and participating universities. In addition, it can also be a means to introduce the program in depth to prospective participants who do not fully know the potential and benefits offered by Sea Teacher. (Zhang, 2012) says that it is essential for future teachers to think globally, have international experience, speak a foreign language and be able to integrate the global dimension into the teaching-learning process. (Egeland, 2016) revealed that joining a teaching abroad program can increase self-confidence, develop practical skills and make decisions independently.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

### Conclusion

Optimizing the Sea Teacher program for Jambi University Economics Education students by socializing the program can run well. This event provides students with a deep understanding of the purpose, mechanism, and benefits of the SEA Teacher program. Students get very clear information about the administrative requirements, technical preparation, and competencies needed to take part in this program. In addition, this socialization activity is also a forum for discussion between students, lecturers, and program managers, who directly help answer various questions and motivate students to actively participate. Thus, students are expected not only to understand the importance of this program for developing professional competencies and international insights, but also to be motivated to participate in the opening of the next Sea Teacher program to get many benefits from this program for self-development and future careers and can contribute to bringing the good name of the Economics Education Study Program and Jambi University at the ASEAN level.

### Recommendations

To ensure the optimization of the sea teacher program continues to run well, several recommendations are given including:

### 1. Administrative assistance

This assistance can be in the form of a) Explanations related to documents that must be prepared such as letters of recommendation, registration forms and passports through online or offline workshops. b) Provision of guidance modules and video tutorials on how to fill out documents correctly which can be accessed online by prospective participants. c) Continued assistance until departure including providing explanations to participants regarding departure schedules, transportation and accommodation during the program.

### 2. Preparatory Training and Competency Strengthening

This preparatory training can be in the form of a) Communication training using English. b) Teaching Simulation where teaching simulations using English with assessment and feedback from mentors. c) Conducting Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) by conducting a comprehensive orientation that includes the culture of the destination country, international ethics and self-management in a foreign environment.

### 3. Digital Outreach and Socialization Program

Several things can be done such as: a) Strengthening the Sea Teacher information portal on the Jambi University International Office website regarding all Sea Teacher activities so far. b) Dissemination of interactive content on social media (Instagram & YouTube) such as alumni testimonial videos, experience vlogs and online Q&A sessions. c) Sea Teacher Ambassador Program by appointing Sea Teacher alumni student representatives who actively promote and guide prospective participants who will participate.

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