Similarities and Differences: A Malaysian and Australian Research Study

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Allan Leslie White
University of Western Sydney

Khar Thoe Ng
SEAMEO RECSAM
Penang
Similarities and differences: A Malaysian and Australian research study
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SEAMEO Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics
Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, 11700 Gelugor, Penang, Malaysia

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The School Educational and Cultural Programme Evaluation Report for the 2011 Australian Pre-Service Teachers Tour involved SEAMEO RECSAM Research and Development (R&D) staff, University of Western Sydney staff and pre-service teachers, Penang school administrators, teachers and students from two primary and two secondary schools.

The researchers would like to acknowledge with appreciation the enthusiastic support and contributions they received from all who were involved in this study with special mention to the following organisations and personnel:

(1) The Administrator(s) and Academic staff of the University of Western Sydney who initiated this programme supported by the Director of SEAMEO RECSAM, Dr. Azian Abdullah and all staff. Under the leadership of Deputy Director (Administration) Hj. Ahmad Ramli, the Malaysian organisation was coordinated by Hj. Zamani Tajuddin. The programme evaluation was conducted under the leadership of the Deputy Director (R&D) Mr. Devadason Robert Peter and implemented by R&D academic and administrative staff.

(2) The Director and officers from Penang State Education Department who endorsed the participation of the following schools in Penang led by school administrators:

(i) Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Sungai Gelugor.
(ii) Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Sri Relau.
(iii) Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Bukit Gambir
(vi) Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan (SMK) Sungai Nibong

It is hoped that the findings and recommendations within this report will justify the trust and support of all those who have made contributions.
## GLOSSARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CA</td>
<td>Curriculum Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KLA</td>
<td>Key Learning Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LBOTE</td>
<td>Language Background Other Than English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSED</td>
<td>Penang State Education Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RECSAM</td>
<td>Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RS</td>
<td>Research Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>Research and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEAMEO</td>
<td>Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SK</td>
<td>‘Sekolah Kebangsaan’ or National School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMK</td>
<td>‘Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan’ or National Secondary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWS</td>
<td>University of Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
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</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Design and Implementation

Any educational and cultural tour will reveal many differences and similarities and the reactions can be positive or negative. A negative reaction seeks to emphasise the differences using the language of exclusion, in order to create a position of power for a few over the many. A positive reaction is more inclusive where the similarities are opportunities for mutual understanding and the differences are opportunities for the enrichment and completion of all. This research study will detail the success or failure of the 2011 School Educational and Cultural Program for Australian Pre-service Teachers to produce a positive reaction.

In 2011 the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers was implemented in 4 schools and was evaluated during this time. The terms of reference for the evaluation study were:

1. Evaluate the impact on all participants of the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers.
2. Evaluate whether the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers should be conducted in 2012.

In order to investigate these two questions, the evaluation study used mixed model research with a combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects and with the theoretical basis for the methodology guided by the principles articulated by Guskey (2000) and framed by the terms of reference of the study.

Principal Findings

This programme evaluation involved the South-East Asian Ministries of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics (RECSAM) Research and Development (R&D) staff, the University of Western Sydney (UWS) staff and pre-service teachers, Penang school administrators, teachers and students from the 4 participating schools. The following are the principal findings.

1. Participants’ reactions

   Administrators, teachers, pre-service teachers and school students regarded the tour as a positive experience. The Malaysian administrators and teachers welcomed the tour and the pre-service teachers who were able to positively contribute to the teaching and learning process within the school. The pre-service teachers benefited from the
programme through their exposure to the educational and cultural contexts of the participating schools. The Malaysian school students enjoyed and were excited at having a pre-service student as their teacher.

2. Participants’ learning

All participants reported learning new things as a result of their exposure to different and diverse cultures, customs and social knowledge, different education and school systems, different teaching methods or pedagogies and other languages.

3. Organisational support and change

Participants reported organisational support and flexibility in meeting their needs. These included assigning teachers to help with lesson planning, organisation of a talk, or assembly, and to act as a guide or supervisor. Resources included specific desks and worktables for preparation and an area to store belongings.

4. Participants Use of New Knowledge

Administrators, teachers and pre-service teachers indicated the tour had resulted in their receipt of new knowledge. The interactions and exchanges between the participants were the vehicle for the learning of educational and cultural information. The new knowledge also involved the changed attitudes and tolerance of diversity and language difficulties. While the use of the new knowledge lies mainly in the future, it was interesting to note the use of social media by the pre-service teachers to disseminate it to a wider audience.

Based on the substantial evidence collected and the analysis conducted on these data, the following recommendations were made.

**Recommendations**

The following considerations are made for the future.

1. SEAMEO RECSAM continues to support the implementation of the Australian Pre-Service Teachers’ Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour in 2012.

2. The School of Education of the University of Western Sydney continues to conduct the Australian Pre-Service Teachers’ Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour in 2012.

3. Greater use of the Internet and social media sites should be explored as a means of providing effective ways of improving communication, planning, collaboration and learning.

4. The suggestions made in Chapter 4 could be given due consideration in future implementations of the programme.
CHAPTER ONE

Similarities and Differences

An educational and cultural tour will reveal many differences and similarities between the visitors and the hosts. The reactions by both parties can be positive or negative. A negative reaction by either party seeks to emphasise the differences between visitors and host by using the language of exclusion, to create a position of power or prestige for a few to reject or disparage the many. While, a positive reaction by either or both parties is more inclusive and regards the similarities between host and visitors as an opportunity for mutual understanding and the differences as an opportunity for the enrichment and completion of all. This research study will detail the success or failure of the 2011 School Educational and Cultural Program for Australian Pre-service Teachers to produce a positive reaction.

1.1 Overview

SEAMEO RECSAM, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation Regional Centre for Education in Science and Mathematics was established in 1967. SEAMEO RECSAM shares the vast expanse of the campus grounds with Institut Pendidikan Guru Malaysia Kampus Pulau Pinang (Malaysian Teacher Education Institute – Penang Island Campus) in Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, of the suburb of Gelugor. It is situated on the city limits of Georgetown, which is the metropolitan capital of the island State of Penang on the north-western part of Peninsular Malaysia. Australia is still strongly connected to Penang due to the air force base at Butterworth.

SEAMEO RECSAM is committed to nurturing and enhancing the quality of science and mathematics education in the SEAMEO member countries of Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam. Australia is seen as an associate member, and at different times has had a strong presence here through the work of various consultants. SEAMEO RECSAM conducts activities in five main areas:

a) Conduct relevant research and development activities to inform pedagogy and policy

b) Design and implement high quality professional development programmes

c) Ensure strong and active collaboration as well as active networking with experts, institutions and the community
d) Serve as an effective clearing house for information

e) Strengthen quality assurance in the management of resources and services rendered

Over the years, SEAMEO RECSAM has grown through constantly improving the physical facilities as well as the quality of their training programmes. While SEAMEO RECSAM has a regional focus, it also engages with local issues and challenges. One Malaysian educational issue that has provoked considerable interest is the Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English (PPSMI). Due to close relationships formed earlier between SEAMEO RECSAM and a staff member of the University of Western Sydney Australia (UWS), a tour was planned whereby UWS students would join local schools as English, Mathematics or Science specialists. The aims were to provide schools with access to first language English speakers and current pedagogies while the pre-service teachers gained through exposure to different educational and cultural experiences. The initial UWS tour in 2005 was planned by the UWS coordinator and the RECSAM Director Dr Azian T. S. Abdullah in response to the Malaysian Education policy.

The tours were successful and conducted in the years that followed and involved Penang pre-schools, primary and secondary schools. There were concerns by various groups with the emphasis on English in the scholastic development of the younger generation lessening the importance of Bahasa Malaysia as the national language. With the change in Malaysian education policy to uphold both languages with the policy, "Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia dan Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris" (MBMMBI) (Upholding Bahasa Malaysia Status and Strengthening English), launched in 2009, the focus of the tours was changed to become broader and to encompass both cultural and educational aims as well as a wider number of subject discipline areas among the pre-service teachers.

The Education Ministry will replace the PPSMI with MBMMBI in 2012. It was claimed that the PPSMI policy failed to achieve its objectives in raising the standard of English among the Malaysian students, while it negatively affected the rural area students’ performance in the subjects of Science and Mathematics.

1.2 The Australian Pre-Service Teachers School Educational and Cultural Programme

The School of Education of the University of Western Sydney has a history of conducting Overseas Professional Experience Programmes for pre-service students in such countries as Malaysia, Fiji, Cook Islands and China. The opportunity to live and work in another culture broadens and deepens the students’ life experiences while encouraging self-reflection of their role as teachers in their own culture. This is a fundamental platform of the School of
Education’s strategy to 'internationalise' its teacher education programmes. Since 2000, this program has been known at UWS as OPEP (Overseas Professional Experience Program) and has a dedicated site on the UWS intranet.

The UWS coordinator set up a UWS staff capacity building process whereby the tour leader trained the other staff member to become the tour leader in the following year. The tour leaders are listed below (Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>OPEP Tour Leader (Speciality)</th>
<th>Leader in Training</th>
<th>Coordinator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Allan White (Mathematics)</td>
<td>Robyn Gregson</td>
<td>Allan White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Robyn Gregson (Science)</td>
<td>Allan Morton</td>
<td>Allan White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Allan Morton (ICT)</td>
<td>Linda Newman</td>
<td>Allan White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Linda Newman (Early Childhood)</td>
<td>Colin Webb</td>
<td>Allan White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Colin Webb (Primary Science)</td>
<td>Shirley Gilbert</td>
<td>Allan White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Shirley Gilbert (Social Sciences)</td>
<td>Allan White</td>
<td>Allan White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Allan White (Mathematics)</td>
<td>Shirley Gilbert</td>
<td>Allan White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The twofold benefits of this process were the increase in the number of UWS staff who formed relationships with RECSAM and Penang Island schools and the provision of a wider range of expertise to RECSAM and to the schools. The new OPEP coordinator in 2012 will be Shirley Gilbert.

1.2.1 The terms of reference of the evaluation

SEAMEO RECSAM and UWS require regular evaluations of their programmes and every year the tour program is the object of research. The terms of reference for this evaluation study are:

1. Evaluate the impact on all participants of the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers.

2. Evaluate whether the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers should be conducted in 2012.

1.3 Theoretical Background of the Programme

The following sections will provide greater substance to the earlier outline of the programme. It is loosely divided into research on student learning and teacher professional learning that is appropriate to the programme.
1.3.1 The background of the pre-service teachers

The University of Western Sydney recognises that pre-service teacher education students need extensive and purposeful experience in diverse educational settings. This tour provides students with the opportunity to build upon the practical experience and understandings developed in Professional Studies subjects and Professional Experience subjects which are conducted in Australian schools.

This OPEP programme provides the opportunity for pre-service teachers to broaden their professional experience by teaching in an alternative educational setting beyond Australian schools. It is based on the general principles of broadening and deepening pre-service teachers’ understanding of the issues confronting the wider education community and of other cultures and educational systems. The more informed the pre-service teacher is about these educational issues and other cultures, the more effective that teacher can be in their own classrooms. To facilitate this understanding, the teacher needs to explore how learning and teaching are conducted in a variety of settings.

The UWS pre-service teachers volunteer to join the tour and must pay all costs. They are either studying for a bachelor's degree in teaching or they hold a bachelor's degree and are now studying for a master’s degree in teaching. Within these degrees, there are subjects where the tour can be used to meet certain assessment requirements.

Each year OPEP offers two tours between Australian academic semesters, usually late June and early July. In 2011 the two tours were to Ningbo China and Penang Malaysia.

1.3.2 The expectations of the Penang tour

The school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers is tailored to suit their needs, interests, expertise and understandings while aiming to promote a rich exchange between Malaysian and Australian participants. It seeks to provide opportunities for Australian pre-service teachers to gain a greater understanding of the Malaysian culture and education system and to enhance the formation of closer relationships between Australian and Malaysian participants. It also seeks to provide professional and educational benefits to Malaysian schools, teachers and students through the work, knowledge and educational preparation of the pre-service teachers.

The expectations of the tour are:

- The UWS pre-service teachers will complete 2 weeks/ 10 days in a Malaysian school.
• As the visit is not a practicum or a formal teaching practice, the Malaysian staff do not have to complete lesson observation reports or do any formal assessment of the UWS pre-service teachers.

• The UWS pre-service teachers are to be of service to the needs of the schools.

• The UWS pre-service teachers will work with and under the direction of the Malaysian teachers and school administrators.

• The Malaysian teachers may direct the UWS pre-service teachers to carry out tasks that are within their abilities to complete. At the start, the UWS pre-service teacher could act as a teaching assistant in the classroom perhaps working with students with learning difficulties. They could mark tests, prepare teaching aids, or complete tasks to assist the Malaysian teacher.

• The Malaysian teachers may encourage the UWS pre-service teacher to teach part or all of a lesson under their supervision. The lesson planning would be a collaborative process as UWS pre-service teachers are unfamiliar with the Malaysian curriculum.

• The Malaysian teachers may encourage the UWS pre-service teacher to share Australian methods and culture.

• The Malaysian teachers may wish to make use of the UWS pre-service teacher’s knowledge of English and pedagogy.

• The UWS pre-service teachers will interact positively with Malaysian school students.

• Pre-service teachers will also experience Malaysian culture outside of school time through planned activities conducted by UWS staff and through informal tourist activities.

The following figure (Figure 1.1) represents the important aspects of the school teaching and learning cycle that the pre-service teachers will experience during their school placement in Malaysian schools.
As a result of the formal and informal aspects of the tour, it is expected that the pre-service teachers will build upon the education and experience they have already received through their university study. Thus some of the potential outcomes for the tour are that pre-service students will:

- Engage in thorough critical and sustained reflections on their practice, and further develop and refine their knowledge, understandings and skills relevant to teaching and learning in a Malaysian context.
- Develop an understanding of the Malaysian system requirements and responsibilities for a range of teachers and administrators.
- Integrate their own learning experiences into the contexts in which they will teach.
- Become successful and contributing members of the staff of the Malaysian school setting for a sustained period of two weeks.
- Continue to refine communication skills and the ability to work effectively as part of a team of educators.
• Enhance their knowledge, understandings and skills as teachers in all phases of the teaching and learning cycle contained in the diagram presented in above Figure 1.1.

• Critically evaluate and gauge their own progress and be capable of articulating how and in what ways they have developed over the course of the tour.

• Learn to take responsibility for their professional development.

The learning of the pre-service teachers will involve their UWS tour leaders as mentors and teacher educators, the Malaysian school teachers and administrators and of course the students. Three levels of knowledge have been suggested as follows.

Level 1. Content knowledge and provision of classroom activities for students' effective learning, including socio-cultural aspects of education such as the wider influences on pupils' learning and reasons why pupils need to learn the content;

Level 2. Content teaching and ways in which teachers think about developing their approaches to teaching, and knowledge of students and schools;

Level 3. The roles and activities of teacher-educators in contributing to developments in (1) and (2) and knowledge of theory, research and educational systems including constraints on teacher education and how they can be tackled (Adapted from Jaworski, 2001; Jaworski & Gellert, 2003)

Each of the levels incorporates those below it. While pre-service teachers will remain predominantly on level 1, the evaluation will seek evidence of new knowledge at all levels.

1.4 Design and Implementation

The 2011 school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers was implemented in 4 schools around Penang Island. This report seeks to detail the evaluation of the impact of the programme according to the terms of reference assigned to the study. It was not possible to include all primary sources of data in this report, either because of reasons of confidentiality, or because of reasons of the size of the final report.

The tour party arrived on the morning of Thursday 7th July and the programme began in week beginning Monday 11th July and finished on Friday 22nd July when the tour party flew back to Sydney Australia.
CHAPTER TWO

Research Methodology

2.1 Overview
At the heart of this 2011 school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers is professional learning. The emphasis is upon the adult participant learning with the assumption that this will translate into gains in school student learning. McCrae, Ainsworth, Groves, Rowland and Zbar, (2001) mapped national and international research on professional learning into four discernible phases containing distinctive models of professional teacher learning:

- Training (in the 1950s and 1960s) that was highly centralised and the use of experts who circulated among the schools;
- In-service education (1970s and early 1980s) involving short courses, highly centralised, with a higher level of awareness of individual student needs and greater use of the train-the-trainer or other cascade models;
- Professional development programmes usually involving whole schools’ pupil-free days (1980s and early 1990s) with more local control; and
- Learning and development involving an learning culture approach (now and in the future) with schools and teachers making their own choices.

The 2011 school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers, it is argued, belongs to the latter model. The pre-service teachers form a learning community and then join the learning communities within their assigned schools.

2.2 Theoretical Basis
The theoretical basis for the methodology of this evaluation study is contained in the principles articulated by Guskey (2000) and was framed by the terms of reference listed earlier. According to Guskey, an evaluation of the effectiveness of any professional development programme depends upon a variety of indicators. He presented these indicators as a hierarchy of levels. The five critical levels of professional development evaluation proposed by Guskey (2000, p. 82) were:

1. participants’ reaction.
2. participants’ learning.
3. organisational support and change.
4. participants’ use of new knowledge and skills.
5. student learning outcomes.

It is generally accepted that the higher the level targeted in Guskey's scale the more difficult it is to measure, this study will report on the first four levels as the fifth would require a longitudinal component that is beyond the scope of the programme and the evaluation as detailed quantitative analyses of student performance were not possible given the time needed for teachers' new knowledge and practices to make an impact on student performance levels.

Level one is a common feature of most evaluation studies and information on participants' reactions is generally gathered through questionnaires handed out at the end of a session or activity. While these:

measures of participants’ reactions are sometimes referred to as 'happiness quotients' by those who insist that they measure only the entertainment value of an activity, not its quality or worth.

(Guskey, 2000, p. 82).

While of a superficial nature, these data are important because ‘unhappiness' would be symptomatic of something very wrong with the program. Thus it is argued that collecting and reporting such data are important because:

measuring participants’ initial satisfaction with the experience provides information that can help improve the design and delivery of programmes or activities in valid ways. In addition, positive reactions from participants are usually a necessary prerequisite to higher level evaluation results.

(Guskey, 2000, p. 82).

Guskey's second level attempts to capture participant learning. In the field of educational research, the term 'learning' is hard to define because it is put to multiple uses and in multiple contexts. Learning is often used to refer to either, (1) the acquisition and mastery of what is already known about something, or (2) the extension and clarification of meaning of an experience, or (3) an organized, intentional process of testing ideas relevant to problems or a mix of all three. Learning is a process that involves change that can include natural growth, the development and fulfilment of potential, personal involvement, and self-initiated independent learning.

Guskey's states that:
Measures must be based on the learning goals prescribed for that particular programme or activity. (Guskey, 2000, p. 83).

The participants in this evaluation study included pre-service teachers, Malaysian school administrators, teachers and students and this study will attempt to uncover the nature of what has been learnt by each group. There are three main characteristics that will be sought: content characteristics; process variables; and, context characteristics.

Content characteristics refer to the new knowledge, skills and understandings acquired through the programme. It includes the characteristics of magnitude, scope, credibility and practicality of the change required to implement the new knowledge and skills. Process variables involve the types and forms of professional learning and the ways in which the activities are planned, implemented and followed up. Context characteristics “involve the organisation, system or culture in which professional development takes place and where the new understandings will be implemented” (Guskey, 2000, p. 6). Guskey emphasised that these three characteristics must be considered, as neglecting any one characteristic could seriously diminish the effectiveness of the professional learning and improvements to student learning.

The third level of Guskey’s list deals with the organisational changes that are required in order to accommodate such a tour. It is an aim that the tour does not impose a heavy burden on the school as the tour seeks to cause the least amount of inconvenience. However, a tour such as this cannot avoid having some impact and the nature and extent of that impact should be identified and measured.

The fourth level deals with the participants’ use of new knowledge and skills. This is a difficult measure to capture as the effects are likely to be long lasting. This study can only capture a brief indication from the two weeks of the tour.

The fifth level of student learning outcomes is beyond the scope of this study. As with the fourth level, due to the brief time frame within which this tour occurs, it is unrealistic to expect a vast noticeable change. Again the outcomes are likely to be long lasting and too difficult to measure, such as a student’s openness to improving their English language proficiency as a result of their interaction with an English speaking pre-service teacher.

Thus this evaluation study concentrated on collecting and reporting such data through the use of questionnaires and focus group interviews.
2.3 Data Collection and Limitations

In this report, data are presented according to the levels of Guskey. While trying to determine if the tour was a positive experience for all participants, the study also sought to provide evidence to answer an underlying question: Does the Australian Pre-Service Teachers Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour programme satisfy expectations or should it be changed?

It is necessary to call attention to the limitations of the data reported in this study. The size and nature of the samples prevents the researchers making statements that can be generalised to the wider population of any of the groups represented by the samples. For example, the composition of the pre-service group changes each tour. One year it could consist of 15 secondary teachers across different subject areas and only 5 primary teachers. The next year the tour could consist of 5 pre-school teachers, 12 primary school teachers and 3 secondary school teachers.

However, this does not diminish the importance of the findings of the study which can be used to improve the effectiveness, value and enjoyment of the experience for all participants.

2.4 Instruments

This study aimed to collect multiple data sources and used multiple instruments to collect these data. There were two main types of instruments, questionnaires and focus group interviews.

2.4.1 Evaluation Questionnaires

This evaluation sought to collect a range of opinions and data. The main instrument was the questionnaire. It was a combination of a short answer section for demographic information, a Likert scale section, and three open-ended questions. There were three groups targeted through the use of questionnaires: Malaysian school principals and teachers; UWS pre-service teachers; and UWS tour leaders.

2.4.1.1 Principal and Teacher Questionnaire

This instrument was designed by the Research Specialist (RS) and revised by the Curriculum Advisor (CA) before the commencement of the educational and cultural tour programme. It consisted of a set of closed, open-ended and Likert scale questions.
2.4.1.2 Pre-Service Teacher Questionnaire

This instrument was designed by RS and revised by the CA before the commencement of the educational and cultural tour programme. It was of similar design to the Principal and Teacher questionnaire.

2.4.1.3 Tour Leaders Questionnaire

This instrument was designed by RS and revised by the CA before the commencement of the educational and cultural tour programme.

2.4.2 School Student Focus Group Interviews

This evaluation sought to collect a range of opinions and data. The target group used for focus group interviews was the school students in both primary and secondary schools. The interview consisted of a number of open-ended questions and students were encouraged to volunteer their opinions. Focus group discussions were recorded, transcribed and key themes identified.

2.5 Programme Implementation and Evaluation Timeline

The timeline shown in Table 2.1 was planned for the implementation of the tour programme and the evaluation report.
Table 2.1

*Implementation And Evaluation Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 7th July</td>
<td>Tour group arrived at SEAMEO RECSAM and began settling-in and orientation programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 8th July - Sunday 10th July</td>
<td>Further orientation, cultural and tourist programmes for the tour group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 11th July - Friday 15th July</td>
<td>Pre-service teachers participated in the Penang school experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 16th July - Sunday 17th July</td>
<td>Further orientation, cultural and tourist programmes for the tour group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 18th July - Friday 22nd July</td>
<td>Pre-service teachers participated in the Penang school experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 20th July</td>
<td>Pre-service teachers completed their questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 21st July</td>
<td>Focus group interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thursday 21st July and Friday 22nd July</td>
<td>School administrators and teachers questionnaire distributed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday 22nd July</td>
<td>Tour group returned to Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday 25th July</td>
<td>Collection of school administrators and teachers questionnaire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August - December</td>
<td>Analysis of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>Compilation and submission of evaluation report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER THREE

Results of the Evaluation Study

3.1 Overview

The data were collected at different times and using a variety of instruments and groups of participants for the purposes of triangulation. The data came from UWS pre-service teachers and staff, Malaysian students, school administrators and teachers. Data collection was mainly done via survey questionnaires administered to school administrators and teachers and pre-service teachers, whereas the interviews were conducted with two groups of primary and secondary students.

This chapter is divided into a number of subsections according to Guskey’s levels. The data collected is of two types: quantitative data which indicates whether an outcome exists and how often it occurs; and, qualitative data that describes the diversity, complexity and richness of the data. The analysis of the findings from the data presented in Chapter 3 will be further elaborated in Chapter 4.

3.2 Data Collected During Programme

The value of a programme such as the Australian pre-service teachers' overseas educational and cultural tour can be judged by considering multiple sources of data as well as a number of indicators within any data source. In the following section, the various data sources are designated by the sub-headings arising from Guskey’s levels and the different indicators are reported under each sub-heading.

3.3 Demographic Information

The demographic data of the respondents were summarised in Tables 3.3.1 and 3.2.2. Due to the small sample sizes and the diversity, there was little analysis done of this data. It is presented for interest and for other researchers should an attempt at meta-analysis be done at some future time.

The respondents were requested to tick one of the columns as their response to the Likert Scale:

**SA:** Strongly Agree,  **A:** Agree,  **D:** Disagree,  **SD:** Strongly Disagree,  **NOp:** No opinion.
3.3.1 Administrator (Principal) and Teacher Questionnaire

Only three of the four schools submitted completed surveys. There were a total of 8 completed surveys. The demographic data are summarised in Table 3.1 for the Malaysian administrators/secondary teachers.

Table 3.1
Background Information of the Administrators/Teachers (N=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background information of respondent administrator/teacher</th>
<th>Number of pre-service teachers attached to types of schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Primary School (SK/SRK)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Position in school:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head of Department</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Qualification:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Certificate/Diploma</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Responses</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject(s) taught at present:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maths/Add Maths</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language/TESOL</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Responses</td>
<td>1*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data reveals the diverse nature of the sample with classroom teachers being in the majority for both primary and secondary schools and with English teachers in the majority.

3.3.2 Pre-service Teacher Questionnaire

While it is the usual practice to have a tour size of 20 to 25 participants, international incidents have an impact on the final number. The initial group size decreased from 23 to 11 after there were earthquakes, terrorist incidents and an airplane crash. It is unfortunate when this occurs but it is difficult to avoid.

A strategy for minimizing the effects of these international incidents is through the tour coordinator maintaining a UWS based website which is open to all students attending UWS. It has information and pictures of all the tours and this serves to reduce confusion and worry. The coordinator also conducts information sessions in the orientation programs for students from the School of Education. Past tour members are recruited to address these sessions and answer questions and give an overview of their experiences.
In 2011, the pre-service teacher group consisted of 9 females and 2 males (Table 3.2). While the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, all pre-service teachers completed it.

Table 3.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background Information of the Pre-service Teachers (N=11)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of pre-service teachers attached to types of schools</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary School (SK/SRK)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational Qualification:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Experience:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed PE1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed PE2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject(s) taught at present:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Primary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Responses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of pre-service teachers were female, with general primary and secondary English the most common subject areas. The teaching experience of the group ranged across the tour being their first in-school experience for two pre-service teachers to five having completed two previous in-school teaching sessions before coming to Penang.

3.4 Participant Reactions

In this section the data revolves around the ‘feel good’ issues that arise from a multitude of interactions and relationships that arise during the in-school experience. In this study the data were collected through a number of questions on the different questionnaires. The reactions of the students were collected through the use of focus groups.

3.4.1 Malaysian administrators/teachers reactions

The responses to a number of questions reflected the administrators/teachers reactions to the 2011 school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers (Table 3.3).
Table 3.3

*Administrators’/Teachers’ Responses to Questionnaire Items b, c and f (N=8).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NOp (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. The pre-service teachers were able to interact in a positive manner with the students at the school.</td>
<td>(37.5)</td>
<td>(62.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. The pre-service teachers worked well with the school staff.</td>
<td>(37.5)</td>
<td>(62.5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. I would be happy to work with Australian pre-service teachers in the future</td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td>(50)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total the administrators and teachers indicated they agreed or strongly agreed that the students had a positive influence upon the school and that they would be happy to repeat the program in the future.

3.4.2. Australian pre-service teachers

All 11 of the pre-service teachers responded to the questionnaire, and Table 3.4 shows their responses on items c, d and f.

Table 3.4

*Pre-Service Teachers’ Responses to Questionnaire Items c, d, and f (N=11)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NOp (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>I was able to interact in a positive manner with the students at the school</td>
<td>(82)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>The school staff was mostly friendly and helpful.</td>
<td>(82)</td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>I would be happy to work in this school in the future.</td>
<td>(64)</td>
<td>(36)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses were very positive indicating a very high level of satisfaction with the in-school component of the tour. The pre-service teachers indicated feeling on good terms with the school administrators, teachers and students. All pre-service teachers indicated that in the future they would be happy to work in the Malaysian school.
3.4.3. Malaysian students

There was common agreement across all student focus groups that they enjoyed and were excited at having a pre-service student as their teacher. When asked why, they used words such as: ‘newness’, ‘different’, ‘younger’, ‘interesting’, ‘explain clearer’ and ‘funnier’. They all mentioned enjoying talking to the pre-service teachers as an opportunity to use and improve their English language. They also liked telling the pre-service teachers about their lives and culture.

When asked about things wrong with the program, the students complained that the program was too short and that there should be more opportunities to interact with the pre-service teachers. One group stated that they felt special because their friends did not have a pre-service teacher. They thought to be fair, that there should be some access to the pre-service teachers by the other students.

3.5 Participant Learning

The data in this section were collected using Likert scale questions, open response questions and focus group interviews. The sub-sections are divided according to the participant groups.

3.5.1 Malaysian administrators/teachers learning

The responses to one Likert scale question reflected the administrators/teachers estimation of learning as a result of the 2011 school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers. According to table 3.5, their estimate was positive towards the contribution to knowledge and learning by the pre-service teachers.

Table 3.5
Administrators’/Teachers’ Responses to Questionnaire Item a (N=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NOp (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. The pre-service teachers were able to positively contribute to</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the teaching and learning process within my school.</td>
<td>(62.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(37.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This evaluation study attempted to uncover details of the sorts of learning that participants were experiencing and were aware of, as in any learning context there is also learning that occurs at a non-aware level. Guskey (2000) sought to uncover content characteristics,
process variables, and context characteristics. To capture these data a number of open ended questions were included in the questionnaire.

The first open question asked the participant to list three EDUCATIONAL things the pre-service teachers shared with them and their staff. While the responses were varied, there were some common themes such as: Pedagogy, Australian Education System, and General information on Australia.

Some of the issues included within pedagogy were classroom management, ICT use, importance of positive interpersonal interaction with pupils, use of games, using art to encourage weak students to use English, and the sharing of resources (books, CDs, and magazines). The issues around the Australian Education System included the duration of teaching and learning activities. The general information concerning Australia included the environment, animals, cultural activities and one school created an Australian corner in their library.

The next open question asked the participant to list three CULTURAL things the pre-service teachers shared with them and their staff. While the responses were varied, there were some common themes such as: general cultural aspects and cultural aspects related to schools. The general cultural aspects included food, stories, aboriginal art, songs, and poems. While the cultural aspects relating to schools involved the pre-service teachers using poems, art and stories as vehicles in developing proficiency with English. Another aspect related to the more relaxed relationship between students and Australian teachers.

3.5.2. Australian pre-service teachers learning

All 11 of the pre-service teachers responded to the questionnaire, and Table 3.6 shows their responses on item a, which indicated that the experience had contributed to their learning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NOp (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>This school experience has contributed to my professional learning.</td>
<td>7 (64)</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, what is more important and more difficult to measure is the content, quality and quantity of the learning. This evaluation study attempted to collect data on all three through the use of open ended questions.
The first open question asked the pre-service teachers to list three EDUCATIONAL things they had learnt during the in-school experience. While the responses were varied, there were some common themes such as: pedagogy, language, and school structure.

The pre-service teachers stated that they learnt successful teaching strategies involving careful planning, teacher enthusiasm, ICT skills, practical activities, clear explanations, use of games, and activities to quickly engage the students. The English language issues involved speaking more slowly, repeating and giving students think time before responding. The school structure issues revolved around primary schools being exam focused, having specialist subject teachers and the teaching of subjects rather than integrated learning units.

The second open question asked the pre-service teachers to list three CULTURAL things they had learnt during the in-school experience. The common themes among the responses were: activities, language and religion. The cultural learning about activities included food and cooking, songs and dance, and the various forms of dress and special costumes. The language learning involved memorising words of Bahasa, Indian and dialects of Chinese. Pre-service teachers learnt the ritual greeting by students and were concerned that the students were timid and unwilling to answer a question unless they were sure they were correct. The students seemed to be more focused on the result rather than understanding the process involved in achieving the result.

3.5.3. Malaysian students

The student focus groups gave the expected responses that were focused on the school subjects being taught, the use of English, and the excitement with having a new teacher. The students commented on the different pedagogies used by the pre-service teachers. They felt the pre-service teachers made the lessons more interesting and they used a greater amount of humour. These responses may just be that the students have a different teacher rather than any real difference in pedagogy and remains an area for further study.

While it is unrealistic to think that a two week interaction will greatly change the students’ proficiency with English, what came through strongly from all groups, was they were motivated to communicate in English. The students felt comfortable with making errors in their engagement with the pre-service teachers. Whether this excitement and motivation will remain after the teachers leave is beyond the scope of this study.

The excitement of having a new teacher who was culturally different and behaved in ways that attracted the interest of the students was a strong theme of many contributions from the focus groups. The students commented on the friendliness and openness of the pre-service
teachers to answering questions. This contributed to the students’ willingness to try and communicate in English.

3.6 Organisational Support and Change

Any visit to a school will have effects upon the organisation of that school. In a programme such as this, the school will make a number of organisational changes in order to accommodate the pre-service teachers. While past evaluation studies have collected these data, this evaluation study attempted to also uncover and gather greater details and to assess the impact upon the school organisation.

3.6.1 Malaysian administrators/teachers

In the questionnaire the administrators/teachers were asked if the tour by the pre-service teachers placed too much work on the school organisation (Table 3.7). Their responses indicated that the respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement. It also meant that the tour did not increase their work load.

Table 3.7
Administrators’/Teachers’ Responses to Questionnaire re Organisational Change (N=8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NOp (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e. The tour by the pre-service teachers placed too much work on the school organisation.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(50) (50)

To capture more specific details of the type of changes required a number of open ended questions were included in the questionnaire. The first open question asked the participant to list organizational changes that the school made to for the pre-service teachers. Their responses focused on the allocation of the pre-service teachers to existing classes and the provision of a special welcoming and farewell ceremonies.

Finally the administrators/teachers were asked if they had suggestions for improving the 2011 school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers. Their responses asked for a longer tour, greater planning before the tour commences, more options for sharing the pre-service teachers’ knowledge and skills, and earlier notification of the tour. These comments will be addressed in the discussion chapter.
3.6.2. Australian pre-service teachers

The pre-service teachers responded to a closed (Table 3.8) and to open questions in the questionnaire.

Table 3.8
*Pre-Service Teachers’ Responses to Questionnaire Item e (N=11)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NOp (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>The school organization was supportive of my needs and requirements.</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>4 (36)</td>
<td>1 (9)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first open question asked the pre-service teachers to list organizational changes that the school made and they listed the usual allocation to classes, the ceremonies and being used as relief teacher for classes without a teacher.

Finally the pre-service teachers were asked if they had suggestions for improving the 2011 school educational and cultural programme. Their responses included more time, better contact with schools before the start of the in-school component, more learning of Bahasa before the tour and greater access to past tour pre-service teachers before the tour.

3.7 Use of New Knowledge

While the advantages of visits such as the 2011 school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers become more visible as time passes they are harder to capture. A longitudinal study would be more appropriate but nevertheless, this study was able to uncover some rich data.

3.7.1 Malaysian administrators/teachers

In the questionnaire the administrators/teachers were asked about the sharing of knowledge by the pre-service teachers and the results are shown in Table 3.9. All agreed that there was a sharing of knowledge.

Table 3.9
*Administrators'/Teachers' Responses to Questionnaire re Use of New Knowledge (N=8)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NOp (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d. The pre-service teachers shared their knowledge and training with the school staff.</td>
<td>3 (37.5)</td>
<td>5 (62.5)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Once the sharing of knowledge has been established, what is of interest is the details of this knowledge and the extent of the sharing. The responses to the open question revealed that the administrators/teachers would use it in the classroom, to make lessons more fun, and to share with other staff members. One teacher was preparing a folio for the other teachers.

3.7.2. Australian pre-service teachers

The pre-service teachers responded to a closed (Table 3.10) and to open questions in the questionnaire. They indicated they were able to use their knowledge in the Malaysian school.

Table 3.10
Pre-Service Teachers’ Responses to Questionnaire Items b (N=11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>D (%)</th>
<th>SD (%)</th>
<th>NOp (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>I was able to positively contribute to the teaching and learning process within the school.</td>
<td>6 (55)</td>
<td>5 (46)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A number of pre-service teachers were communicating their new knowledge to others via their social media sites. One pre-service teacher had constructed a blog containing photos and commentary for her family and other Australian pre-service teachers not on the tour. This is an area that has been under utilised so far.

However what is also of interest regarding new knowledge is how the pre-service teachers will use their new knowledge in future classrooms. Their responses to the open questions indicated a greater awareness of the needs of students with different cultural backgrounds, a determination to be more patient and tolerant, and a desire to incorporate their new knowledge in their lesson planning. The following responses are typical of the sentiments expressed by the pre-service teachers:

*I will be more tolerant and patient with different cultural background or are struggling with English.*

And

*In the future classroom having lessons planned to be adapted to a range of skills, use the acquired language ... encourage tolerance and education – you realise we’re all the same.*
3.7.3 Tour leaders

There were two UWS tour leaders each year, one female and one male. Usually the main leader trains the other leader and then the following year the leader in training becomes the main leader who then trains the next new leader. However, in 2011 the two leaders had previous experience, as the coordinator was mentoring the new coordinator. Both leaders expressed a high level of personal satisfaction with the tour and a high level of satisfaction with the school component of the tour.

The tour leaders were thankful to the Penang Education Department and the schools for the access to their schools. They sought to minimise the burden upon the school organisation and were realistic about the contribution that pre-service teachers were able to make in return. This contribution depended upon the pre-service teachers’ background knowledge, previous training and experience.

I am very thankful to the Penang State Education Department and RECSAM for their encouragement, organisation and assistance. They have been most welcoming and supportive. I thank the Director of RECSAM Dr Azian and the staff for their patience and work on our behalf. The tour leaders rely heavily upon their friendship and support. Specifically I am very thankful of the efforts of Mr Zamani in the areas of accommodation, orientation and initial contact with school principals.

The success of the tour relies heavily upon the generosity of spirit and openness of the Malaysian teachers and principals, and I cannot thank them enough, as the pre-service teachers were made to feel welcome and encouraged to use their talents.

Lastly, I wish to thank all those delightful school students who made the tour a lifelong memory for the pre-service teachers. (Tour leader 1, 2011).
Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Overview

Within the limitations of the data, the analyses of data used elements from grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) and content analysis, although a full application of these techniques did not occur due to the exploratory nature of the evaluation. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were used as neither on its own yields as much information as they did together (Cant, 1997).

The terms of reference for this evaluation study were:

1. Evaluate the impact on all participants of the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers.
2. Evaluate whether the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers should be conducted in 2012.

This framework incorporating Guskey's (2000) levels was used to discuss the findings in the following sections.

4.2 Participant Reactions

In harmony with previous tours the data revealed that the majority of the various groups of participants were very satisfied with the tour outcomes. The data revealed the tour process was inclusive of people and viewpoints where similarities were used as opportunities for mutual understanding and differences were used as opportunities for the enrichment and empowerment of all.

The Malaysian administrators and teachers welcomed the tour and the pre-service teachers who were able to positively contribute to the teaching and learning process within the school. They encouraged the pre-service teachers to interact in a positive manner with the students who were excited to have them working in their school. The school staff built a good rapport with the pre-service teachers. The pre-service teachers benefited from the programme through their exposure to the educational and cultural contexts of the participating schools. The Malaysian school students enjoyed and were excited at having a pre-service student as
their teacher. They felt special because their friends did not have a pre-service teacher and thought to be fair, that there should be some access to the pre-service teachers by the other students.

**Implication 1**

The analysis of data recommends that SEAMEO RECSAM continue to support the implementation of the Australian Pre-Service Teachers’ Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour in 2012.

**4.3 Participant Learning**

This report attempted to collect and describe the content characteristics of the learning which refers to the new knowledge, skills and understandings acquired through the programme. It includes the size, scope, credibility and practicality of the change required to implement the new knowledge and skills.

The administrator and teacher respondents indicated that the students in the participating schools benefited from the exposure to the pre-service teachers. This exposure included the geography and culture of Australia, access to 'native' speakers of English, and the similarities and differences in Malaysian and Australian education and school systems.

The pre-service teachers benefited from their interactions within the schools. Their new learning was in the areas of the pedagogy, the language, and school structure. This involved successful teaching strategies, careful planning, teacher enthusiasm, ICT skills, practical activities, clear explanations, the use of games, and activities to quickly engage the students. The English language issues involved speaking slower, repeating and giving students think time before responding. The school structure issues revolved around primary schools being exam focused, having specialist subject teachers and the teaching of subjects rather than integrated learning units. They were also exposed to the diversity of students and differences between Australian and Malaysian students.

The Malaysian school students were strongly positive about the tour. They were excited about having a new teacher and were motivated to communicate in English. The students felt comfortable with making errors in their engagement with the pre-service teachers. Whether this excitement and motivation will remain after the teachers leave is beyond the scope of this study.

This report also attempted to collect and describe the processes involved and the types and forms of professional learning and the ways in which the activities are planned, implemented and followed up. The main processes for learning were principally through the interactions
between the participants, and through the planned and shared teaching sessions. This is an area that requires greater research focus.

Context characteristics “involve the organisation, system or culture in which professional development takes place and where the new understandings will be implemented” (Guskey, 2000, p. 6) will be examined in the next level.

**Implication 2**

As a result of the positive experience of the pre-service teachers and the gains for all participants in understanding and knowledge resulting from the tour, this report recommends that the School of Education of the University of Western Sydney continue to conduct the Australian Pre-Service Teachers Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour in 2012.

**4.4 Organisational Support and Change**

Administrators and teachers were supportive and flexible in meeting the needs of the pre-service teachers which included assigning teachers to guide and share lessons, supervision of planning, preparing allocation schedules and planning and conducting welcoming and farewell ceremonies. The pre-service teachers’ were very appreciative of, the organisational support given by the participating schools. Pre-service teachers were assigned to supervising staff and desks or worktables were prepared in the staffroom for their lesson preparation.

Both groups provided suggestions for improvement that included asking for a longer tour, greater planning before the tour commences through better contact with schools and earlier notification of the tour before the start of the in-school component, and more learning of Bahasa Malaysia. Consideration of more options for sharing the pre-service teachers’ knowledge and skills was also suggested.

A consideration of these issues in greater details can be found elsewhere (Ng & White, 2010) and a brief treatment follows.

**Length of time:** Many administrator, teachers and pre-service teachers felt that there was a need to revise, lengthen or extend the duration of the tour so that more experience of the culture, knowledge and information could be shared. While it is true that a longer tour would increase the sharing and consolidate the effectiveness of the tour, unfortunately the tours could only be offered to the pre-service teachers in the time period available between the university semesters. The pre-service teachers give up their mid-semester holidays to go on
these tours. There was also a cost factor involved as the pre-service teachers must pay for all their own costs such as airfare, accommodation and living costs.

**Preparation of pre-service teachers regarding Malaysian culture.** Many administrator, teachers and pre-service teachers felt that pre-service teachers should learn and explore Malaysian culture first in order to improve teaching skills and to avoid cultural shock. While opportunities to gain an understanding of Malaysian culture, the Malaysian education system and some basic Bahasa Malaysia are provided to the pre-service teachers during the first semester of the university year, students have difficulties finding the time as most also participate in full or part-time employment while completing their studies.

The tour party members are also provided with a tour booklet which also has information on Malaysian culture, the Malaysian education system and some basic Bahasa Malaysia but the timeframe is so short and it is unrealistic to expect anything but a surface understanding.

**In school duties.** The pre-service teachers are at different stages of their university teaching programmes and so differ in confidence, skills and knowledge. While some pre-service teachers felt that they should be given a class to teach over the whole time period or to have more teaching, others were content to be a teacher helper and assist the usual classroom teacher.

Some school administrators, teachers and school students expressed the desire for more sessions in order to share knowledge, ideas, and experience. With better internet connections this is an area that can be explored.

**Implication 3**
Greater use of the Internet could assist in the pre-planning, communication and collaboration of visitors and hosts before the tour begins.

**Recommendation 3**
Greater use of the Internet and social media sites should be explored as a means of providing effective ways of improving communication, planning, collaboration and learning.

**4.5 Use of New Knowledge**
Administrators, teachers and pre-service teachers indicated the tour had resulted in their receipt of new knowledge. The interactions and exchanges between the participants were the vehicle for the learning of educational and cultural information. The new knowledge also
involved the changed attitudes and tolerance of diversity and language difficulties. While the use of the new knowledge lies mainly in the future, it was interesting to note of social media by the pre-service teachers to disseminate it to a wider audience.

**Recommendation 4**

In order to improve the effectiveness and productiveness of the educational and cultural tour it is necessary to seek the opinions of all participants as to ways to do this. These suggestions have been discussed in this section. Thus it is a recommendation of this report that the suggestions made in Chapter 4 could be given due consideration in future implementations of the programme.
CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

5.1 Overview

The Australian Pre-Service Teachers’ Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour programme was implemented in 4 Penang Island schools. The programme evaluation involved SEAMEO RECSAM R&D and Administrative staff, University of Western Sydney staff and pre-service teachers, Penang school administrators, teachers and students from the 4 schools. The terms of reference of the study were:

1. Evaluate the impact on all participants of the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers.
2. Evaluate whether the school educational and cultural programme for Australian pre-service teachers should be conducted in 2012.

In order to investigate these two questions, the evaluation study used mixed model research with a combination of quantitative and qualitative aspects and with the theoretical basis for the methodology guided by the principles articulated by Guskey (2000) and framed by the terms of reference of the study. In order to summarise the finding, a return to the title is required.

5.2 Similarities and differences

The title of this publication arose from the many differences and similarities between the visitors and the hosts as a result of any educational and cultural tour. This research study examined whether the 2011 School Educational and Cultural Program for Australian Pre-service Teachers produced a positive reaction among all participants. This positive reaction from all participants (administrators, teachers, pre-service teachers and school students), used the similarities between host and visitors as opportunities for mutual understanding and differences as opportunities for the enrichment and completion of all.

The researchers conclude that the data shows ample evidence that the experience of the tour was a positive one and find the following quote from an earlier research paper is still relevant to the 2011 tour:

*The data reported in this paper showed the richness and complexity of the sharing and relationship building that resulted from the tour. Thus the pre-service teachers...*
experienced the curriculum from multiple perspectives and worked on developing culturally responsive teaching strategies to assist their students construct knowledge, and to build on their personal and cultural strengths (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). There are many intangible benefits that cannot be captured but nevertheless are felt by all participants, who are better people for the experiences arising from the tour. It was not surprising that the evaluation report (Ng & White, 2010) recommended that both SEAMEO RECSAM and the School of Education of the University of Western Sydney continue to support the implementation of the Australian Pre-Service Teachers Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour in the following year (White & Ng, in press).

5.3 List of Recommendations

Throughout the evaluation process recommendations were sought from the respondents, i.e. the UWS staff, pre-service teachers, the school administrators, the teachers, and the students. Their responses were included throughout the report. While the Centre is cognizant of the successful conduct of this professional experience, it is also necessary to look into some aspects of the implementation procedures that could still be improved as discussed in Chapter 4. The following are some of the recommendations derived from an overall collective response rather than an individual response to be considered when implementing the programme in the future.

1. SEAMEO RECSAM continues to support the implementation of the Australian Pre-Service Teachers’ Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour in 2012.

2. The School of Education of the University of Western Sydney continues to conduct the Australian Pre-Service Teachers’ Overseas Educational and Cultural Tour in 2012.

3. Greater use of the Internet and social media sites should be explored as a means of providing effective ways of improving communication, planning, collaboration and learning.

4. The suggestions made in Chapter 4 could be given due consideration in future implementations of the programme.
REFERENCES


Similarities and Differences: A Malaysian and Australian Research Study

by:
Allan Leslie White, Khar Thoe Ng