

Understanding Teachers' Perceptions of International Practicum and Students' Social-Emotional Learning

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Welcome to the Summer 2023 Issue in Volume 26 of the *Educational Research and Development Journal*. We present two articles that examine teachers' perceptions on their international practicum and teachers' perceptions of the social-emotional needs in their schools.

International student teaching or practicum is a valuable context to help teachers develop an extensive and deep understanding of teaching and nurture their cultural awareness and competence central to working with diverse students in various cultural contexts (Clement & Outlaw, 2002; Mahon & Cushner, 2002). In a qualitative study, Wan, Sharma, Walker, and Habib examined the perceptions that teacher and leadership education students and their mentors from a US university developed from their six-week practicum in China. They analyzed the open-ended survey, reflection, and observation data collected from participants. They revealed that the practicum allowed them to develop an eye-opening and life-changing experience about teaching, culture, and diversity that offers implications for their future careers. It also posed several challenges for their engagement in the practicum in China, such as limited preparation for them to understand the hosting country and its school and students before the practicum and weak collaborative community among participants and their mentors for the interactional practicum central to the supporting participants' successful experiences. Overall, the study suggests that the international practicum experience is useful in supporting university students in teacher and leadership education programs in developing professional identities, cultural awareness, and competence necessary to be effective teachers and administrators working in the ever culturally interconnected and diversified school and classroom contexts.

Social-emotional learning has become an increasingly popular focus of education research (Hoffman, 2009) as it is seen as critical in developing the whole child among students beyond their academic learning (Yoder, 2014) but central to improving their academic achievements (Elias, 2003). Subsequently, teachers need to develop an appropriate understanding of how students develop their social-emotional competencies, factors influencing such development, and teaching practices help nurture the development of students' social-emotional capacity (Ferreira, Martinsone, & Talić, 2020; Gimbert, Miller, Herman, Breedlove, & Molina, 2023). Thus, it is necessary to examine how to identify teachers' perceptions of students' social-emotional learning, the factors influencing it, and teaching practices effectively shaping students' social-emotional learning in school contexts (Poulou, 2017). Through a pilot study, Huck, Zhang, Garby, and Li reported their efforts in developing and validating a questionnaire instrument to identify teachers' perceptions of students' social-emotional learning needs, their knowledge, skills, training, and experiences central to working effectively with students on social-emotional learning, and barriers for them to implement such teaching practices and receive professional development regarding social-emotional learning. The researchers examined the responses to the questionnaire instrument from 25 teachers in multiple content areas, working in various kinds of schools, with various levels of teaching experience teaching. They showed that the instrument could be used in multiple sites and contexts to assess teachers' readiness for developing students' social-emotional competencies and identify their barriers to effectively supporting students' social-emotional learning. The study

also found that participants required proper training and support to implement teaching practices focusing on students' social emotional learning. They agreed that students' social-emotional learning could positively impact their relationship skills and responsible decision-making.

The publication of the above articles in this issue would not be possible without all of the reviewers' thorough and constructive suggestions and comments. We thank their careful, critical, and hard work here. Hopefully, these articles will help enrich your understanding of teachers' international practicum experience and their ideas for assessing students' emotional learning in the classrooms. They will also be informative for you to examine similar issues deeply, extensively, and continuously. Finally, we sincerely encourage all the Chinese American Educational Research and Development Association members, other professional researchers, and practitioners to contribute to the *Educational Research & Development Journal*. These contributions will make the journal a high-quality outlet for enriching our understanding of various professional education issues.

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