



*Journal of International Students*  
Volume 15, Issue 11, 2025, pp. 1-22  
ISSN: 2162-3104 (Print), 2166-3750 (Online)  
jistudents.org  
<https://doi.org/10.32674/zb66yg02>



# **Overseas Teaching and Professional Growth in the Short-Term International Mobility Program: Practical Experiences and Educational Implications for Preservice Teachers in Taiwan**

Hsien-Ming Lin

*Center of Teacher Education, National Pingtung University, Taiwan*

Sheau-Wen Lin

*Department of Science Communication, National Pingtung University,  
Taiwan*

Ya-Ting Lee

*Department of Education, National Pingtung University, Taiwan*

---

## **ABSTRACT**

*This study examines the experiences, meanings, and professional development of preservice teachers at National Pingtung University (NPTU) in Taiwan who participated in a short-term international mobility program that involved overseas teaching in Kampar, Malaysia. Guided by the four educational competencies proposed by NPTU's Suzaku Pioneer University Social Responsibility (USR) Project—professional competence, exploratory competence, practical competence, and caring competence—this qualitative study employed thematic analysis to examine data collected through semi-structured interviews, reflective reports, and teaching activity documentation. The findings indicate that although the short program duration limited the deepening of professional teaching knowledge, it significantly enhanced students' exploratory, practical, and caring competencies. The participants developed greater sensitivity to cross-cultural educational contexts, improved their reflective teaching practices, and expressed stronger concerns for educational equity and social justice. The program also broadened their global perspectives and intercultural communication skills, particularly among those traveling abroad for the first time. This study highlights the importance of short-term international mobility programs in enhancing teacher education and*

*concludes by discussing the study's limitations and providing recommendations for future research.*

**Keywords:** National Pingtung University, Short-term Mobility, Suzaku Pioneer Program, Teacher Education, Taiwan-Malaysia Education

**Received:** May 7, 2025 | **Revised:** July 10, 2025 | **Accepted:** September 10, 2025

**Editor:** Dr. Elena de Prada Creo, Vice Dean for International Affairs, University of Vigo, Spain

**How to Cite:**

Lin, H.-M., Lin, S.-W., & Lee, Y.-T. (2025). Overseas teaching and professional growth in the short-term international mobility program: Practical experiences and educational implications for preservice teachers in Taiwan. *Journal of International Students*, 15(11), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.32674/zb66yg02>

---

## INTRODUCTION

In today's era of rapidly increasing cross-border exchanges in higher education, the pursuit of internationalization has become a top priority for universities worldwide. Institutions are striving not only to enhance their international visibility and competitiveness, but also to equip students with the skills and experiences necessary to thrive in an increasingly interconnected world. Within this global push, however, teacher education programs hold a distinct and often more complex position within the broader higher education system. Unlike many professional disciplines that emphasize global applicability and the cultivation of transferable technical expertise, teacher education must also respond to the particularities of national educational policies, cultural expectations, and local classroom realities. However, departments rooted in disciplinary fields such as engineering, business, or science typically recruit both domestic and international students, offering curricula that are designed to be globally portable. The knowledge and skill sets acquired in these programs are widely applicable across various contexts, thus facilitating international student mobility, academic exchange, and even transnational employment opportunities. This disciplinary universality makes it easier for such departments to engage in international collaborations and joint degree programs. As Murray (2015) noted, the mobility of disciplinary knowledge not only supports cross-national academic communication but also expands students' access to comparative and multicultural learning experiences.

Unlike other academic disciplines, preservice teacher education programs are inherently national. They are designed primarily to cultivate qualified teachers who can meet the specific requirements of their country's educational system, curriculum standards, and teacher certification policies. As a result, most students enrolled in teacher education programs are domestic, and upon completing their training, they are typically expected to work within their national school systems. This localized orientation not only shapes the curriculum content and pedagogical approaches used in teacher education but also reinforces a strong alignment with

national examinations, teacher qualification standards, and domestic employment pathways. Such institutionally embedded characteristics create a structural and practical disincentive for internationalization efforts. Unlike other professional programs, which often emphasize transnational competencies and global employability, preservice teacher education tends to remain grounded in national priorities and localized teaching contexts. This embeddedness makes it more difficult for teacher education institutions to integrate international mobility programs, attract international students, or design coursework that is globally transferable. As Koh et al. (2022) argue, this “inward facing” orientation presents unique challenges to promoting internationalization within teacher education, particularly in systems where certification and employment are closely tied to national regulations.

Although promoting internationalization at the preservice teacher education stage presents significant challenges, teachers remain central figures in shaping the next generation to become globally minded citizens. They are expected to instill not only subject-matter knowledge but also global citizenship awareness, cross-cultural communication skills, and multicultural competencies in their students. In this context, enhancing the international competencies of preservice teachers is not merely a desirable goal; however, it is an educational imperative. It also reflects the strategic directions of national education policies, particularly in societies that aspire to strengthen their global engagement through education. In Taiwan, these priorities were formally articulated in the Ministry of Education’s “White Paper on Teacher Education,” released in 2012. This policy document introduced a “Plan for the Internationalization of Teacher Education,” which acknowledged the structural constraints faced by preservice teachers in Taiwan. Given that teacher education programs typically last only two to four years and are tightly scheduled to include coursework, certification exams, and mandatory teaching internships, long-term overseas study programs (such as degree-seeking mobility) are often impractical for this group. Instead, the policy emphasized the importance of designing shorter-term international experiences that could be more realistically embedded into teacher education pathways without disrupting the rigorous timeline required for licensure and employment (Ministry of Education, Taiwan, 2012; Tangen et al., 2015).

Accordingly, the white paper advocated for the establishment of short-term international mobility mechanisms specifically tailored to the constraints of teacher education programs. These mechanisms include options such as overseas internships lasting at least six months, multi-month educational observation placements abroad, or short-term teaching assignments in foreign educational contexts. While these programs vary in length and format, they share the common goal of exposing preservice teachers to international perspectives without disrupting the structured progression toward teacher certification. Despite their limited duration, an emerging body of research has shown that these short-term mobility experiences can still have a meaningful and lasting impact on participants. For example, students often report gains in multicultural understanding, greater sensitivity to cultural diversity in the classroom, and improved cross-cultural communication skills. In addition, these programs have been found to reduce psychological barriers such as fear, anxiety, or uncertainty, which often accompany long-term international study or professional engagement. As Roy et al. (2022) noted, short-term experiences can serve as a

critical “entry point” to global engagement, helping students build confidence and readiness for more extended international opportunities in the future. Thus, even when constrained by time, such programs offer significant educational value in cultivating globally competent future teachers.

The Ministry of Education in Taiwan has thus placed considerable emphasis on leveraging short-term international mobility programs as a means to broaden the global outlook and enhance the cross-cultural competencies of preservice teachers. These initiatives aim to equip future educators with the pedagogical capacity to foster global citizenship among their students, which is a goal that aligns with both international educational trends and Taiwan’s domestic aspirations for a more globally engaged teaching workforce. Despite the clear policy direction and nearly ten years of promotion, the actual participation rate in such programs has remained relatively low. Between 2016 and 2024, only 2355 preservice teachers in Taiwan participated in overseas internships, international teaching practicums, or short-term educational visits abroad. Given that Taiwan’s teacher education programs enroll approximately 9,000-10,000 students annually, this means that, over eight years, fewer than 3% of all preservice teachers have engaged in such international experiences. This strikingly low participation rate underscores the gap between policy ambitions and actual implementation. The data suggest a noticeable gap between policy expectations and implementation outcomes. Several possible factors may contribute to this discrepancy, including limited funding, heavy academic and certification-related obligations, a lack of institutional incentives, and uneven access to overseas opportunities. These structural and logistical challenges continue to hinder the widespread integration of international experiences within the framework of teacher education in Taiwan (Department of Teacher and Art Education, Ministry of Education, 2024).

The gap between policy ideals and educational realities underscores the urgent need for more context-specific and empirically grounded research on short-term international mobility in preservice teacher education in Taiwan. While policy frameworks have promoted such initiatives for nearly a decade, relatively little is known about how these programs are experienced by participants and what impacts they may have. To address the discrepancies between policy ideals and actual educational practices, this study examines the experiences of preservice teachers who participated in a short-term international mobility program. The focus is placed on understanding the multifaceted effects of this overseas teaching experience on both their professional development and personal growth. Rather than treating short-term mobility as merely an opportunity for cultural exposure, this research investigates how such programs may serve as critical sites for educational transformation and reflective learning.

However, while previous studies have focused primarily on short-term international mobility programs from the perspective of intercultural learning or cultural adjustment, very few empirical studies have explored such programs with a specific focus on Taiwanese preservice teachers. Even fewer studies have examined how these experiences contribute to students’ professional growth and the construction of personal educational meaning. Therefore, the study explores three key dimensions. First, it examines how participants engage with cross-cultural educational environments and develop intercultural sensitivity through direct interactions with students and teachers in a foreign context. Second, it investigates the perceived impact of the program on their pedagogical skills and

teaching confidence, including their ability to adapt, collaborate, and reflect in unfamiliar settings. Third, it examines how participants construct personal meaning from their experiences, particularly in terms of their evolving professional identity and their commitment to inclusive and globally conscious teaching practices. By analyzing these dimensions, the study aims to generate more profound insights into how short-term mobility programs can play a significant role in preparing preservice teachers to become globally competent, ethically aware, and professionally reflective educators even within the limited timeframes such programs typically offer. This study aims to address the knowledge gap in the literature by examining the multiple dimensions of learning that may occur during a short-term international practicum.

The following sections first review the relevant literature and theoretical context, introduce the analytical framework based on the four educational competencies proposed by the Suzaku Pioneer project—professional competence, exploratory competence, practical competence, and caring competence—and then analyze the qualitative data collected during the program. Finally, the article concludes with a discussion of key findings, limitations, and implications for future research and practice.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous Taiwanese studies offer crucial insights into short-term international mobility in teacher education; however, they often leave unexamined how these programs translate into deeper pedagogical transformations. For example, Huang and Lin (2020) reported that 2–6 weeks of overseas practicums significantly enhanced participants' language proficiency, teaching confidence, curriculum design skills, multicultural awareness, and reflective professional identity. However, their analysis also revealed persistent barriers such as inequitable access, insufficient institutional support, and high language demands that limit the potential for widespread pedagogical impact in the teacher education context. Wu and Tian (2020) documented a thirteen-year mobility initiative, emphasizing the importance of formalized institutional structures, cross-departmental collaboration, and foreign-language scaffolding in establishing sustained international engagement. Empirical findings from Singapore-based programs (Lee, 2022; Wu & Cheng, 2020) also show gains in confidence and classroom adaptability. Similarly, Chang (2020) and Liu (2018) confirm that even fortnight-long experiences can foster multicultural competence. Nevertheless, critiques by Lin (2020) and Huang (2020) underscore that funding insecurity, curricular misalignment, and administrative obstacles continue to restrict meaningful inclusion of international experiences in Taiwanese teacher education.

In contrast, international research offers a richer comparative perspective and deeper theoretical framing of short-term mobility as a transformative educational practice. For example, Mikulec (2019) studied 34 U.S. preservice teachers who conducted short-term mobility projects in Brighton, England, and demonstrated that intentionally incorporating reflection into 20-hour classroom observations enhanced participants' tolerance for ambiguity, cultural responsiveness, professional autonomy, and communicative agency. Moreover, studies such as Hur et al. (2024) highlight that even brief immersion in South Korea can enhance American in-service teachers' empathy toward immigrant students, culturally

responsive practices, and relational pedagogies. Xu et al. (2023) investigated how short-term mobility (STM) influences subsequent full-degree abroad experiences among Chinese students. Drawing on interviews with 31 participants and framed by the affect–behavior–cognition (ABC) model, this study reveals that STM has a positive influence on the preparatory, operational, and imaginative aspects of longer-term study abroad. Specifically, STM fosters affective confidence, behavioral adaptability, and cognitive clarity, enabling students to navigate the academic, social, and cultural dimensions of overseas experiences. These outcomes suggest that STM can serve as a valuable stepping stone that enhances students’ readiness, resilience, and vision for studying abroad and pursuing a full degree in Western countries. Moreover, Morley et al. (2019) conducted a comprehensive critical literature review of 47 empirical studies on short-term study abroad programs for preservice teachers (PSTs) published between 2000 and 2019. Using a postcolonial theoretical framework, the authors analyzed the geographic patterns, programmatic structures, and conceptual orientations of these programs, with a particular focus on how such mobility experiences reinforce or challenge global North–South power asymmetries. Their findings revealed that most study abroad programs originate from institutions in the Global North, particularly the United States, tend to be short-term, faculty-led, and primarily focused on providing cultural exposure rather than sustained, reciprocal engagement with host communities (Chen & Bang, 2020). While many programs aim to foster intercultural competence and professional growth in PSTs, the review criticizes the tendency of these initiatives to replicate colonial dynamics, such as privileging the learning of Northern participants over the needs or agency of communities in the Global South. Furthermore, the authors highlight the lack of attention in the literature to host community perspectives, the often-superficial nature of cultural immersion, and the need for more research from and about the Global South.

However, this study offers a distinctive and theoretically significant contribution to the literature on preservice teacher education by foregrounding a global South-to-South mobility context (Taiwan to Malaysia) that is largely absent in mainstream Western scholarship. According to the literature review above, much of the literature on study abroad for preservice teachers has been dominated by Global North institutions, particularly those in the United States and Western Europe; however, this research presents the experiences of Taiwanese PSTs from a nonmetropolitan teacher education university that participated in a short-term teaching practicum in Malaysia. Rather than reproducing the traditional Global North–South movement, which often involves colonial legacies and a developmentalist gaze, this study documents a form of South–South (Taiwan and Malaysia) educational exchange embedded in shared linguistic, cultural, and historical ties across ethnic Chinese communities in Asia. In doing so, it not only challenges the hegemonic orientations of Western-based mobility research but also destabilizes dominant assumptions about whose knowledge, experience, and perspectives are centered in the discourse on international teacher education. The present study adopts a reflective lens, examining how Taiwanese preservice teachers engage with Malaysian school communities through pedagogical collaboration, mutual respect, and a shared ethnic Chinese heritage.

In addition to contributing to the broader discourse on global teacher education, this study addresses notable gaps in Taiwanese academic research.

Although Taiwan has actively promoted short-term international mobility programs for teacher candidates in recent years, much of the existing scholarship remains limited in scope, concentrating primarily on intercultural encounters, language acquisition, or cross-cultural adaptation. Insufficient attention has been given to how such experiences inform deeper aspects of preservice teachers' professional identity development, personal growth, and meaning-making processes (Zhao & Bava Harji, 2024). As Chen (2019) noted, empirical investigations into the long-term impacts of short-term mobility, particularly in relation to professional development, identity construction, and future engagement in international education, remain rare. Therefore, considering these research gaps, the present study investigates the experiences of ten preservice teachers from National Pingtung University (Taiwan), who, under the leadership of the authors, participated in a ten-day overseas teaching program at ethnic Chinese elementary schools in Kampar, Malaysia, in June 2024. Specifically, the study aims to investigate how this short-term international mobility experience impacts participants' teaching competencies, professional growth, and reflective development, drawing on a qualitative methodology informed by semi-structured interviews and thematic inquiry.

### **Case Context and Theoretical Framework**

National Pingtung University (NPTU), situated in southern Taiwan, is a comprehensive institution with a long-standing tradition in teacher education and a strong emphasis on local engagement. The university's roots in teacher education can be traced back to the establishment of the Pingtung Normal College during the Japanese colonial period in the 1940s. Thus, NPTU has a long history of over 80 years in teacher training and continues to play a critical role in the landscape of teacher education in Taiwan. Throughout its history, the university has upheld and evolved the core spirit of normal education, dedicating itself to cultivating qualified and outstanding educators for the nation and society. In recent years, in response to the broader shift in Taiwan's higher education environment, which calls for universities to assume more active and multifaceted social functions, the NPTU has also proactively participated in University Social Responsibility (USR) initiatives. Through such engagement, the university aims to meet societal expectations regarding the public value and social role of higher education institutions.

Since 2018, the College of Education at National Pingtung University (NPTU) has implemented the "Suzaku Pioneer: Rural Co-learning Model with Three Types of Teachers" University Social Responsibility (USR) project. The central innovation of this project lies in its "three-teacher co-learning" model, which fosters collaboration among university faculty, in-service teachers, and preservice teachers. These three groups engage in joint curriculum design, educational dialog, and practical teaching, forming intergenerational professional learning communities that promote the mutual exchange of pedagogical knowledge and instructional strategies.

The project also strengthens institutional linkages between the university and local schools, seeking to bridge the persistent divide between educational theory and classroom practice (Chen, 2023). In addition to addressing local educational needs in southern Taiwan and the Pingtung region, the Suzaku Pioneer project has increasingly sought to respond to the rising importance of internationalization in

teacher education. However, the structural conditions of the case university reveal specific constraints that shape the scope and nature of such efforts. Historically, the NPTU has operated primarily as a teacher training institution focused on preparing primary school educators for the domestic system. It was only after its reorganization into a comprehensive university in 2014 that it began to engage more actively with internationalization. Compared with those of metropolitan universities in Taiwan, these efforts began relatively late and with limited institutional infrastructure. The Office of International Affairs, for example, was not established until after 2014.

As of 2024, the university has enrolled a total of 8,740 students. Among them, only 39 were international students, accounting for a mere 0.45% of the student population. Even when 82 overseas Chinese students from Hong Kong, Macau, and mainland China were included, the combined number of nonlocal students reached only 121, or approximately 1.38% of the entire student body. These figures starkly illustrate the university's limited international presence. Such low levels of international student enrollment and engagement reflect broader structural and geographic constraints. The NPTU's location in a nonmetropolitan area, its historically domestic orientation, and its late entry into international academic networks have collectively contributed to a relatively insular educational environment. As a result, students at NPTU have significantly fewer opportunities for international exposure and cross-cultural academic interaction compared to their peers at urban research universities. In this context, the Suzaku Pioneer project's attempt to integrate short-term international mobility into teacher preparation represents not only a response to national policy trends but also a proactive institutional strategy to overcome localized barriers to global engagement.

To expand preservice teachers' global perspectives and intercultural communication competencies, the project integrates a mobility scheme into the curricular framework. Within this framework, students are encouraged to participate in overseas teaching, such as the current program in Malaysia. In June 2024, a group of ten preservice teacher education students from NPTU participated in a ten-day overseas teaching program held in Kampar, Malaysia. The participating students were all undergraduate-level learners who were receiving teacher education. While the majority were enrolled in the Department of Education, several students came from other academic disciplines but were also in the process of completing the university's teacher education program. All of them would become qualified teacher candidates upon fulfilling the relevant requirements. Among the ten students, approximately half had prior international travel or educational experience, whereas the other half were traveling abroad for the first time. This diversity in international exposure brought varying levels of cultural preparedness, which contributed to the richness of group dynamics and reflective learning during the program.

Under the guidance of the authors, who also served as the course instructors and project leaders, the students traveled to several ethnic Chinese primary schools situated in rural new villages historically established by Chinese immigrant communities. In addition to engaging in classroom observations and teaching activities at multiple Chinese primary schools, the students also participated in a series of academic and cultural activities organized in collaboration with NPTU's partner institution in Malaysia, Universiti Tunku

Abdul Rahman (UTAR). Faculty members and student buddies from UTAR played a crucial role in supporting the program, assisting with classroom arrangements, facilitating local school connections, and accompanying NPTU students on extracurricular visits to various cultural and historical sites. Their involvement greatly enriched the overall learning experience by providing linguistic, artistic, and logistical support throughout the program. Therefore, over ten days, the student participants engaged in onsite instructional activities, intercultural exchanges, and collaborative teaching projects with local educators and students. By implementing such a short-term international mobility mechanism, the project aims to increase students' sensitivity to global educational issues and cultural diversity, develop their international viewpoint and multicultural adaptability, and ultimately strengthen their ability to practice culturally responsive instruction upon entering the teaching profession (Gay, 2002).

The Suzaku Pioneer Project proposes a framework consisting of four interrelated competencies, professional competence, exploratory competence, practical competence, and caring competence, as a conceptual and evaluative lens for preservice teacher development (Yang, 2022; Lin et al, 2024). Although developed within a Taiwanese teacher education context, this framework is grounded in a synthesis of well-established educational and psychological theories that underscore its relevance. Most notably, the model is inspired by John Dewey's educational philosophy, particularly his emphasis on the interplay of experience, reflection, and action as a means of fostering meaningful learning. Dewey's notion of "learning by doing" not only informs the dimension of practical competence, which emphasizes teachers' ability to adapt instruction through iterative reflection but also underpins the broader view that teacher education should be situated in authentic, context-rich environments (Schmidt & Allsup, 2019).

In addition to Dewey's pragmatism, the Suzaku framework draws conceptual support from the ABC model of intercultural competence, which posits that individuals experiencing cross-cultural experiences develop in three mutually reinforcing domains: affect (emotional responses and attitudes), behavior (observable actions and performance), and cognition (knowledge, understanding, and interpretation). Each of the four competencies corresponds to one or more aspects of the ABC model. For example, exploratory competence is closely related to the cognitive and affective domains, as it involves openness to new perspectives, curiosity about unfamiliar cultural and educational practices, and the ability to critically analyze and interpret contextual differences. Practical competence reflects behavioral adaptation and problem-solving in response to diverse classroom realities, in line with the behavioral domain of the ABC model. Caring competence addresses the affective dimension most directly, focusing on empathy, relational sensitivity, and ethical responsibility toward students, particularly those from marginalized or underserved backgrounds. Finally, professional competence represents an integration of the cognitive and behavioral domains, as it involves the acquisition and application of pedagogical knowledge, curriculum design, and classroom management strategies in ways that are both theoretically informed and contextually responsive (Zhou et al., 2008; Rienties & Jindal-Snape, 2016).

Furthermore, the alignment of the Suzaku four-competency model with the

tripartite taxonomy of learning encompassing the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains reinforces its theoretical coherence and educational relevance. Rather than privileging cognitive knowledge in isolation, the model advocates a holistic approach to teacher preparation. It emphasizes that effective teachers are not only knowledgeable but also emotionally attuned to students and communities, ethically engaged in their professional roles, and capable of acting adaptively in complex teaching environments. This comprehensive vision echoes contemporary calls for teacher education to cultivate not only technical proficiency but also intercultural awareness, emotional intelligence, and reflective judgment. By drawing from these theoretical foundations, the four-competency framework does not emerge arbitrarily but instead represents a contextually grounded and theoretically informed response to the challenges and opportunities posed by short-term international mobility. It provides a lens through which to examine how Taiwanese preservice teachers, positioned within the Global South and participating in a South–South mobility initiative, experience professional and personal growth. Rather than treating overseas teaching as a vehicle for superficial exposure to difference, the four-competency model allows for a deeper investigation into how such experiences foster the transformation of teachers’ professional, exploratory, practical, and caring competences.

## METHODOLOGY

To address the research questions guiding this study, a qualitative research design was employed, with data collection primarily conducted through semi-structured interviews. This approach enabled the researchers to elicit rich, in-depth accounts of participants' experiences, thoughts, and reflections related to their engagement in a short-term international mobility program (Jamshed, 2014). A total of ten preservice teachers participated in the interviews, which were conducted in a conversational yet guided format that allowed for both consistency and flexibility. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. In addition to the interview data, supplemental materials such as student-written reflection reports, informal discussions during the program, and post-program group debriefing sessions were used to enhance the depth and triangulation of the findings. These data were analyzed via thematic analysis, a widely used method in qualitative research for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning across datasets. Following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework, the researchers familiarized themselves with the data, generated initial codes, searched for and reviewed themes, defined and named the themes, and ultimately produced a narrative synthesis grounded in the empirical material. This method was particularly suitable for exploring how participants interpreted their teaching experiences, emotional responses, professional development, and evolving sense of identity in a transnational educational context.

Importantly, all the authors of this study are faculty members and serve as course instructors responsible for organizing and implementing the short-term overseas program. Their roles extended beyond those of passive observers; they were actively involved in the design and execution of pre-departure training sessions, onsite teaching activities in Malaysia, and post-trip group reflections. This dual role as educators and researchers positioned them near the participants,

enabling access to rich, contextualized insights but also necessitating conscious engagement with issues of reflexivity. The authors acknowledge that their professional backgrounds, pedagogical values, and relational proximity to the participants inevitably shaped the way the data were interpreted and presented. Their insider status allows them to observe and understand nuanced aspects of students' interactions, emotions, and challenges that external researchers might otherwise overlook. Moreover, researchers have remained attentive to the ethical and analytical challenges posed by such positionality, striving to maintain a balance between empathetic engagement and critical distance (Kelly et al, 2017). By positing ourselves transparently within the research process, the authors aim to foster a more reflexive grounded understanding of the impacts and implications of short-term international mobility programs in teacher education.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Through the analysis of qualitative data, including activity records, student interviews and student feedback reports related to the short-term international mobility program, the researchers reported that the overseas teaching experience in Malaysia had varying impacts on students across the four core educational competencies.

### **Impact on Professional Competence**

Regarding professional competence, most participating students indicated that the overseas teaching program had only a limited impact on enhancing their educational knowledge and pedagogical skills. One of the key reasons for this perceived limitation was the structural design of the mobility program itself. During the ten-day experience, the itinerary included visits to multiple ethnic Chinese primary schools in the Kampar region of Malaysia, with activities focused primarily on school tours, cross-cultural observations, and interactive sessions rather than teaching engagements. This arrangement, while enriching in terms of cultural exposure, offered fewer opportunities for the systematic application or development of teaching strategies within a classroom setting. Therefore, the students' reflections revealed a clear awareness of this structural constraint. For example, Student S3, who participated in such a short-term mobility program for the first time, stated the following:

"I believe that our professional knowledge and skills in education were developed primarily through our teacher education courses at NPTU. We didn't truly learn new skills specifically for this ten-day overseas teaching program. Rather, we consolidated and applied what we had already learned at university into practice abroad. It felt more like implementing known content rather than acquiring new knowledge or skills for the sake of the program." (Student Interview Data, S3)

Student S5 further elaborated on why the impact on professional competence seemed limited, attributing it to the nature of the program's structure:

"I think the main reason is that the teaching activities overseas were mostly introductory or activity based. When we entered local ethnic Chinese

primary schools, we usually had only a few hours, at most half a day, with the students. As such, it was difficult for us to systematically teach professional knowledge learned from Taiwan. Most of the time, it felt more like leading activities rather than conducting in-depth teaching. If there had been more class time or fewer schools to visit, it might have allowed for more professional instruction and deeper engagement." (Student Interview Data, S5)

These students' reflections echo discussions in the literature about the limitations of short-term international mobility programs. Selby (2018) argued that given the typical short duration (approximately ten days to two weeks), short-term programs often blur the lines between educational mobility and international tourism. Consequently, students are susceptible to a "tourist gaze," whereby they experience cross-cultural encounters superficially, without engaging in deeper critical analysis of sociocultural differences. Moreover, because most program activities and lessons were prearranged by both universities and host schools prior to departure, students had limited opportunities to design or adapt lessons on-site. The preplanned nature and the restricted timeframe left little room for participants' professional growth. These insights underscore the importance of intentional curriculum design in short-term international mobility programs. When aiming to enhance preservice teachers' professional competencies within a limited timeframe, program organizers must strike a careful balance between cultural exchange and pedagogical depth. In this context, Janes (2008) suggested that universities should allow greater student participation in planning processes and encourage learning outside formal classroom settings, such as through community activities. This would enable students to develop critical reflection skills regarding educational issues and cultural phenomena encountered abroad.

### **Impact on Exploratory Competence**

In terms of exploratory competence, all the participating students reported that their overseas teaching experience significantly strengthened their willingness to actively engage with unfamiliar cultures and educational issues. The program not only broadened their international perspectives but also enhanced their intercultural communication skills. Notably, nearly half of the students had never traveled abroad prior to this experience. For these individuals, the program served as a formative introduction to cross-border mobility and laid an important foundation for developing their capacity for international engagement and comparative educational understanding.

The first author recorded the following in the field note:

"I was quite surprised to find that nearly half of the students in our group were traveling abroad for the first time. This highlights the difference between higher education environments in metropolitan areas and those in regional universities. Had I been teaching in Taipei or other major cities, I believe that the proportion of students with prior international experience would have been much greater. This realization made me even more convinced of the significance and necessity of organizing this short-term international mobility program for the students." (First Author's Field Note)

Student S2 shared her thoughts about the first time she traveled abroad.

"This was my very first time going abroad, so everything felt new and exciting to me. When I arrived in Malaysia, I immediately noticed the significant differences between it and Taiwan. Malaysia is a culturally diverse country where people from different ethnic backgrounds live together and speak different languages. Surprisingly, in some new Chinese villages, people could actually understand and speak the Hakka or Hoho languages. It felt both familiar and unfamiliar at the same time. This experience truly opened my eyes to the complexity of cultural identity and made me realize how language can connect people across borders." (Student Interview Data, S2)

Moreover, student S1 reflected on her experience using English during the program:

"Back in Taiwan, I rarely had the chance to actually speak English in real-life situations. However, during this trip to Malaysia, I had several opportunities to use English to communicate with both local elementary students and university students from our partner school. At first, I was nervous, but I realized they were also very open and supportive, which helped me build confidence. After classes, we also spent time with the Malaysian university partners exploring different parts of the city together. These experiences felt like small adventures to me. The experiences weren't just about sightseeing; they were moments that pushed me to step out of my "comfort zone" and interact with people and places in ways I never had before. It made me want to explore more, not just abroad but also within myself." (Student Interview Data, S1)

While the short duration of the international mobility program may have limited its impact on enhancing students' professional teaching competencies, its positive effect on students' exploratory competence was nonetheless clear and significant. The participants reported above show a notable increase in their willingness and confidence to communicate in a foreign language, particularly English, which was used to interact with both local elementary students and university students from the Malaysian partner institution. With the support of student buddies from UTAR, the participants engaged in cross-cultural dialogue and actively explored local communities and cultural sites. These experiences not only broadened their understanding of Malaysian society but also encouraged them to step outside of their comfort zones, cultivating greater openness to unfamiliar environments and a more proactive attitude toward intercultural engagement (Prazeres, 2016). From a theoretical standpoint, this growth in exploratory competence can be interpreted through the lens of the ABC model, in which the affective dimension was evident in students' development of curiosity, intercultural openness, and emotional resilience when unfamiliar cultural practices were present. The behavioral domain was reflected in their increased use of English in authentic communicative settings and their willingness to participate in unfamiliar social and educational contexts. Cognitively, the overseas experience stimulated students' critical awareness of cultural relativity, linguistic

diversity, and academic practices beyond the Taiwanese context. As students encountered different social norms, schooling systems, and ways of communicating in Malaysia, many began to reflect not only on what was unfamiliar but also on what was unexpectedly familiar. One student, during an informal conversation with the authors, remarked that “*Cross-cultural experiences are like looking into a mirror. Through the process, you start to see how you are different from others but also how much you have in common.*” This metaphor captures the essence of intercultural learning as a dialogic process that encourages students to examine their own assumptions through the lens of cultural comparison.

Through such reflection, students came to recognize that many beliefs, behaviors, and practices, especially in different societies and contexts, cannot be universally categorized as right or wrong, superior or inferior. Instead, the student participants learned to consider these differences in relation to cultural context, historical background, and social positioning. This shift in the cognitive perspective reflects the kind of intercultural competence that goes beyond factual knowledge, instead emphasizing the ability to think relationally and appreciate the multiplicity of truths embedded in different cultural logics. By recognizing that educational norms and social values are culturally situated rather than absolute, students began to develop a more flexible and inclusive approach to understanding diversity in both global and local educational and societal settings.

### **Impact on Practical Competence**

With respect to practical competence, most interviewed students indicated that their participation in the short-term overseas teaching program provided opportunities to engage in tasks and roles they had seldom previously encountered. This unfamiliar yet immersive setting prompted them to actively reflect on how to narrow the gaps between educational theory and real-world classroom practice, particularly in areas such as curriculum planning, instructional strategies, and adaptive teaching techniques. The logistical and pedagogical challenges that emerged during the program created authentic opportunities for students to test and refine their teaching assumptions, leading to an enhancement of their problem-solving abilities and on-the-spot adaptability. One particularly striking challenge that highlighted the need for flexible pedagogical responses was the difference in written language systems between Taiwan and Malaysia. While both regions primarily use Mandarin Chinese as a spoken language, the writing systems and phonetic conventions differ significantly. In Taiwan, traditional Chinese characters and the Zhuyin (Bopomofo) phonetic system are used exclusively. In contrast, Malaysia’s ethnic Chinese communities, most of which are descendants of immigrants from mainland China, are more accustomed to simplified Chinese characters and Hanyu Pinyin, which are dominant in China and widely adopted in Chinese diaspora communities overseas. This divergence was not initially anticipated by the students, who had prepared their teaching materials and slides mainly in traditional characters and with references to Zhuyin. Student S7 reflected on the dissonance between pre-departure preparation, and the linguistic realities encountered on-site:

“Although we conducted various assumptions and rehearsals beforehand, the reality overseas was different from what we experienced in Taiwan. For example, all our presentations and materials were initially prepared in traditional Chinese characters. However, upon arrival, we discovered that most ethnic Chinese descendants in Malaysia were more familiar with simplified Chinese and Pinyin. As a result, we quickly modified our teaching materials into simplified characters and included phonetic transcriptions.” (Student Interview Data, S7)

This moment of recognition not only deepened the students’ awareness of the diversity within “Chinese language” communities across the globe but also illustrated the importance of cultural and linguistic sensitivity in cross-border educational engagements. From a learning perspective, these moments represented more than technical adaptations; they were sites of reflective practice, where students were asked to act, assess, and revise in real time.

In addition to linguistic system adjustments, students also encounter unexpected situations during the program. For example, the local schools arranged a mural painting activity that presented both a novel challenge and a valuable opportunity for teamwork. Student S6, who served as a team leader during the mural project, reflected,

"The mural painting task was truly a major challenge for us. Not all ten of us had a background in art or painting, and the school only gave us one day to complete the work—transforming an old, dirty wall into something beautiful. We had to complete every step—from designing the pattern, sketching, and coloring to revising—within a single day. We painted from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nonstop. When we finally finished, both the teachers and we were amazed and proud of what we had achieved. I must say, it was precisely the time pressure that naturally fostered team communication and cooperation. Faced with real-world problems, we immediately discussed and solved these issues together. I believe this experience perfectly embodies the idea of 'learning by doing and modifying during action'." (Student Interview Data, S6)

**Figure 1. The wall painting performed by NPTU preservice teachers**



The discussion shows that the short-term international mobility experience provided fertile ground for cultivating preservice teachers' practical competence, particularly through the lens of Dewey's educational philosophy of "learning by doing." Dewey emphasized that education should not be confined to the transmission of abstract knowledge but rather should emerge through active engagement with real-life problems in authentic social contexts (Landorf & Wadley, 2022). In alignment with this philosophy, the overseas teaching program immersed students in dynamic environments that required them to respond, adapt, and act in real time. Rather than merely rehearsing fixed teaching techniques, students had to navigate challenges as they arose, make decisions, modify plans, and collaborate with peers under shifting cultural and instructional conditions. These real-time modifications did more than just solve a practical problem; the experience of having to adapt content, adjust expectations, and coordinate with team members not only sharpened their communication and teamwork skills but also helped them internalize the concept that effective teaching is context-sensitive, flexible, and culturally responsive. The students' responses to situational challenges demonstrated that their learning was not limited to content mastery but was extended to the cultivation of practical wisdom, namely, knowing how to teach, when to change courses, and how to do so in ways that respect cultural diversity and learner needs.

In this context, short-term international teaching experience plays a vital role in bridging the gap between educational theory and practice. When immersed in an unfamiliar teaching context, students were required to respond to real-world challenges, make on-the-spot pedagogical decisions, and continuously reflect on the consequences of their actions. These conditions created an authentic environment for cultivating practical competence not only in the abstract but also through task-based learning that demanded immediate application and adjustment. From a theoretical standpoint, such experiences are closely aligned with the behavioral dimension of the ABC model of intercultural competence, which emphasizes the development of observable skills and context-sensitive responses in cross-cultural situations. In navigating linguistic adjustments, classroom management in unfamiliar settings, and collaborative work with both local students and peers, participants demonstrated significant growth in their ability to act appropriately, flexibly, and effectively in new environments. These behavioral competencies are not isolated from knowledge and attitudes; rather, they demonstrate students' ability to translate cognitive understanding and affective openness into concrete pedagogical actions. Accordingly, such experiences enhanced their problem-solving capabilities, strengthened their confidence in managing unexpected situations, and deepened their knowledge of the relational and contextual nature of education. In doing so, the program not only embodied Dewey's vision of learning but also fostered the core practical competencies that future educators need, namely, the ability to think reflectively, act responsively, and teach adaptively in diverse and evolving educational environments.

## Impact on Caring Competence

Finally, in terms of caring competence, the short-term international teaching experience in Malaysia has played a significant role in expanding students' capacity for empathy, intercultural sensitivity, and ethical engagement with educational inequality. The multiethnic and multilingual composition of Malaysian society presented a rich context in which Taiwanese preservice teachers could observe how individuals from diverse cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds coexist, negotiate differences, and construct shared social spaces. Students were particularly struck by the resilience of Malaysia's ethnic Chinese communities, whose efforts to preserve cultural identity and educational rights in a complex national landscape prompted deep reflection on the intersections of ethnicity, language, and belonging (Yee Mei, 2023).

Student S10 shared the following insight after visiting several Chinese primary schools in rural areas:

“This was not only my first-time visit to Malaysia but also a profoundly eye-opening experience. I realized how challenging it is for Chinese immigrants to establish their lives, settle down, and preserve their cultural identity in a host society. I also witnessed how ethnic Chinese students in Malaysia must strive to secure their rights and status within the local education system. This experience made me more willing to empathize with and understand the needs of students, especially those from minority groups or those with special educational needs, when I returned to Taiwan. Moreover, visiting rural areas such as Kampar made me deeply appreciate the privileges we often take for granted in Taiwan and recognize that many rural or remote areas around the world still lack enough educational resources. Issues of educational equity and social justice, I believe, are matters of concern for all people globally.” (Student Interview Data, S10)

This testimony reflects a broader trend among participants, many of whom reported a heightened awareness of both cultural diversity and educational injustice. Exposure to Malaysia's pluralistic society not only sharpened students' recognition of difference but also fostered a deeper understanding of how individuals and communities negotiate their identities within asymmetrical power relations. As students engaged with peers from local universities, taught in under resourced rural schools, and observed the everyday realities of immigrant life, they developed a more nuanced appreciation of cultural hybridity, educational access, and the sociopolitical dimensions of teaching. From a theoretical perspective, these developments can be fruitfully interpreted through the ABC model of intercultural competence. The affective dimension was particularly salient, as students exhibited increased empathy and openness toward cultural others. Many reported emotional resonances with the struggles of marginalized students, expressing a desire to teach with greater cultural sensitivity and to advocate for more inclusive educational practices. The behavioral component was evident in how students adjusted their attitudes and interactions, demonstrating patience, humility, and active listening during their engagements with children, teachers, and local community members. Moreover, the cognitive domain was

reflected in students' expanded understanding of the structural inequalities embedded in education systems, both abroad and domestically, and in their ability to analyze those inequalities within comparative and global frameworks. These affective, behavioral, and cognitive gains also correspond closely to the three domains of educational learning—emotional (affective), skill-based (psychomotor), and intellectual (cognitive).

In addition to fostering affective empathy and intercultural awareness, short-term overseas teaching also played a formative role in cultivating a cosmopolitan identity among the participating preservice teachers. Unlike conventional North–South mobility programs where students from the Global South engage with the educational systems and cultures of dominant Western societies, this South–South mobility between Taiwan and Malaysia offered a different model of global learning. The cultural encounters that occurred in this context were not marked by stark asymmetries of power or a sense of Western cultural superiority but rather by shared histories, linguistic proximities, and overlapping cultural trajectories within the broader Asian region. This Asian regional form of mobility enabled students to approach cultural differences not through the lens of exoticization or assimilation but through identification and relational understanding. As fellow inhabitants of Asian societies shaped by postcolonial histories, plural ethnic compositions, and ongoing struggles for educational equity, both Taiwanese and Malaysian communities provided mirrors for mutual reflection. Students were prompted to consider how minority rights, language preservation, rural development, and multicultural coexistence are negotiated within societies that, while distinct, face many similar challenges.

Moreover, the Taiwan–Malaysia context encouraged students to see value in non-Western educational practices, appreciate the resilience of diasporic communities, and understand diversity as something that emerges from within rather than something to be imported from without. Such insights deepened students' cultural humility and strengthened their capacity to care across differences, not as an act of charity but as a recognition of shared human struggles. In this way, the South–South mobility experience fostered a more grounded and culturally responsive form of global citizenship, which is a key element of cosmopolitan education. Thus, the development of caring competence is inseparable from the formation of a cosmopolitan sensibility grounded in empathy, reflexivity, and ethical relationality (Bilecen, 2016).

## CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

This study explored the experiences and reflections of preservice teachers from National Pingtung University who participated in a short-term international teaching program in Kampar, Malaysia. Drawing on the four educational competencies of the Suzaku Pioneer Project—professional, exploratory, practical, and caring competence. The findings highlight that, despite inherent time and depth limitations, such programs can significantly enrich students' cross-cultural perspectives, reflective practices, and humanistic awareness. Notably, the experience fostered students' exploratory competence by encouraging them to observe, question, and engage with unfamiliar educational and cultural contexts. Their practical competence was strengthened through real-time adaptation, teamwork, and reflective teaching. In contrast, caring competence emerged

through their heightened sensitivity to issues of educational equity, minority rights, and social justice. Although gains in professional competence were perceived as modest, the program nonetheless catalyzed activating and applying knowledge acquired at the university in diverse settings.

These findings suggest that thoughtfully designed South–South mobility programs can offer meaningful and culturally relevant alternatives to dominant North–South exchanges. They not only broaden students’ global outlook but also cultivate context-aware, ethically engaged teacher identities. Future research should consider cross-institutional comparisons, incorporate mixed-method evaluations, and pursue longitudinal studies to better understand how such experiences shape long-term professional development and life meanings among preservice teachers (Aladegbaiye et al, 2021).

## Appendix

### Demographic Information of Preservice Teacher Participants

| Code | Gender | Major                    | Grade |
|------|--------|--------------------------|-------|
| S1   | F      | Education                | 2     |
| S2   | F      | Education                | 3     |
| S3   | M      | Education                | 2     |
| S4   | F      | Science<br>Communication | 4     |
| S5   | F      | Education                | 2     |
| S6   | F      | Education                | 3     |
| S7   | M      | Education                | 3     |
| S8   | F      | Science<br>Communication | 4     |
| S9   | F      | Education                | 2     |
| S10  | F      | Education                | 3     |

## REFERENCES

- Aladegbaiye, A. T., de Jong, M. D., & Beldad, A. D. (2021). How international students’ acculturation motivation develops over time in an international learning environment: a longitudinal study. *Journal of International Students, 12*(2). <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v12i2.3642>
- Bilecen, B. (2016). International students and cosmopolitanisms: Educational mobility in a global age. In A. Amelina, K. Horvath, & B. Meeus (Eds.), *An anthology of migration and social transformation* (pp. 231–244). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23666-7\\_15](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-23666-7_15)
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Chen, H.-F. (2023). The process of deepening assessment practices and reflections on university social responsibility: A case study of the "Suzaku Pioneer: Tri-teacher collaborative learning model in Pingtung's rural areas." *Educational Research Monthly, 349*, 54–71.
- Chen, M., & Bang, H. (2020). Exploring East Asian Undergraduate Students’

- Perceptions about the effectiveness of their preparation for study abroad for academic success in U.S. universities. *Journal of International Students*, 10(1), 181–202. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v10i1.1049>
- Department of Teacher and Art Education. (2024). Borderless teaching: Overseas teaching internships and the International Schweitzer Program annual exhibition held at National Pingtung University. Ministry of Education.
- Gay, G. (2002). Preparing for culturally responsive teaching. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 53(2), 106–116. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053002003>
- Huang, C.-K., & Lin, Z.-B. (2022). The impact and inspiration of international teaching internships on global competence and teaching professionalism: A case study of University X. *Journal of Teacher Education and Professional Development*, 15(3), 25–50. <https://doi.org/10.53106/207136492022121503002>
- Hur, J., Yoo, H., Lee, S., & Suh, S. (2024). Promoting intercultural competence and cultural responsiveness: The impact of short-term study abroad on in-service teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 49(12). <https://doi.org/10.14221/1835-517X.6219>
- Jamshed, S. (2014). Qualitative research method—Interviewing and observation. *Journal of Basic and Clinical Pharmacy*, 5(4), 87–88. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0976-0105.141942>
- Janes, D. (2008). Beyond the tourist gaze? Cultural learning on an American "semester abroad" programme in London. *Journal of Research in International Education*, 7(1), 21–35. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240907086886>
- Kelly, M., deVries-Erich, J., Helmich, E., Dornan, T., & King, N. (2017). Embodied reflexivity in qualitative analysis: A role for selfies. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 18(2), Article 12. <http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:0114-fqs1702124>
- Koh, A., Pashby, K., Tarc, P., & Yemini, M. (2022). Editorial: Internationalization in teacher education: Discourses, policies, practices. *Teachers and Teaching*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2022.2119381>
- Landorf, H., & Wadley, C. (2022). The importance of John Dewey's philosophy for global learning theory and practice. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 17(1), 6–18. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SSRP-09-2021-0027>
- Li, C.-C. (2022). Cultivating "extraordinary talents": Internship at Chinese High School in Singapore. *Taiwan Educational Review Monthly*, 11(9), 206–212.
- Lin, H.-W., Li, Y.-T., & Yang, C.-Y. (2024). Advancing local knowledge in rural education: Experiences and insights from the Suzaku Pioneer Program. In *Suzaku Illuminates the Educational Dream in Southern Taiwan* (pp. 3–24).
- Mei, H. G. Y. (2023). Examining the intersection of cultural identities: The Malaysian Chinese experience. *Junctures: The Journal for Thematic Dialog*, 23, 55–71.
- Mikulec, E. (2019). Short-term study abroad for preservice teachers: Personal and professional growth in Brighton, England. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 13(1), Article 11.

- <https://doi.org/10.20429/ijstl.2019.130111>
- Morley, A., Braun, A. M. B., Rohrer, L., & Lamb, D. (2019). Study abroad for preservice teachers: A critical literature review with considerations for research and practice. *Global Education Review*, 6(3), 4–29.
- Murray, J. (2015). Eleven: Teacher education and higher education. In *Teacher education in times of change* (pp. 191–208). Policy Press.  
<https://doi.org/10.51952/9781447318552.ch011>
- Prazer, L. (2016). Challenging the comfort zone: Self-discovery, everyday practices and international student mobility to the Global South. *Mobilities*, 12(6), 908–923. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2016.1225863>
- Rienties, B., & Jindal-Snape, D. (2016). A social network perspective on ABC of international and host-national students. In D. Jindal-Snape & B. Rienties (Eds.), *Multidimensional transitions of international students to higher education* (pp. 53–70). Routledge.
- Roy, A., Newman, A., & Lahiri-Roy, R. (2022). Antecedents of short-term international mobility programs: A systematic review and agenda for future research. *Globalization, Societies and Education*, 22(2), 226–239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14767724.2022.2076657>
- Schmidt, M., & Allsup, R. (2019, July 29). John Dewey and teacher education. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education*.  
<https://oxfordre.com/education/view/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.0001/acrefore-9780190264093-e-475>
- Selby, D. (2018). Short-term international mobility: Transformative or touristic? European Association for International Education.  
<https://www.eaie.org/resource/short-term-international-mobility-transformative-touristic.html>
- Tangen, D., Henderson, D., Alford, J., Hepple, E., Alwi, A., Abu Hassan Shaari, Z., & Alwi, A. (2015). Shaping global teacher identity in a short-term mobility programme. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(1), 23–38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2015.1119803>
- Wu, L.-J., & Tyan, N.-C. (2020). The internationalization of teacher education institutions in Taiwan: A case study. *Taiwan Journal of Educational Research*, 1(1), 51–72.
- Wu, Y.-S., & Cheng, W.-N. (2020). Dreaming in a foreign land: The appearance of kindergarten internships in Singapore. *Taiwan Educational Review Monthly*, 9(12), 39–42.
- Xu, X., Peng, J., Xia, Y., & Zhang, R. (2022). How international short-term mobility experience affects full-degree abroad experience: Insights from Chinese students. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 42(6), 1549–1563. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2022.2133092>
- Yang, C.-Y. (2022). Implementing rural education practices through tri-teacher collaborative learning: A case study of the USR project at National Pingtung University. *Educational Research Monthly*, 334, 21–34.
- Zhao, Z., & Bava Harji, M. (2024). Systematic Review of Global Research on Acculturation of International Students (2003-2023). *Journal of International Students*, 14(3), 427-447. <https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v14i3.6690>
- Zhou, Y., Jindal-Snape, D., Topping, K., & Todman, J. (2008). Theoretical models of culture shock and adaptation in international students in higher

education. *Studies in Higher Education*, 33(1), 63–75.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/03075070701794833>

## Bios

**Hsien Ming Lin, PhD**, is an Assistant Professor at the Center of Teacher Education, National Pingtung University, Taiwan. With two PhDs in social and cultural anthropology (KU Leuven, Belgium) and social science (National Sun Yat-sen University, Taiwan), his research adopts an interdisciplinary and East Asia-centered regional studies approach, bridging educational governance, the political economy, and the social sciences. Prof. Lin primarily employs qualitative methods while also engaging in mixed-methods research on education and social issues. In addition, he is actively involved in University Social Responsibility (USR) projects at NPTU. He has led international teaching practicums in Malaysia, aiming to cultivate international mobility and intercultural competencies among preservice teachers. This article is based on research findings from those overseas teaching experiences. Email: [hsienming79@mail.nptu.edu.tw](mailto:hsienming79@mail.nptu.edu.tw)

**Sheau-Wen Lin, PhD**, is a Professor at the Department of Science Communication, National Pingtung University, Taiwan. Holding a B.S., M.S., and PhD in Science Education, she played a pivotal role in founding the Department and the university's STEM Education Center to advance teacher preparation and research. Her work bridges formal and informal science education, with a strong emphasis on preservice teacher programs and the development of STEM curricula. Prof. Lin currently leads initiatives to improve science education in rural areas through a University Social Responsibility (USR) project. This article highlights the collaborative project through which she and her colleagues at NPTU support preservice teachers in international experiential learning and teaching in partnership with primary schools in Malaysia. Email: [linshewen@mail.nptu.edu.tw](mailto:linshewen@mail.nptu.edu.tw)

**Ya Ting Lee, PhD**, is a Professor at the Department of Education, National Pingtung University, Taiwan. Her primary research interests lie in curriculum and instruction, aesthetic education, and cross-grade pedagogy. In recent years, she and college members have led university social responsibility (USR) initiatives focused on supporting small rural schools in demographically declining regions. Through a triadic co-learning model involving university faculty, preservice teachers, and in-service educators, they advance instructional quality and teacher professional development. This article highlights a collaborative project led by her and NPTU colleagues, guiding preservice teachers in international learning and engagement with remote primary schools in Malaysia. E-mail: [yating@mail.nptu.edu.tw](mailto:yating@mail.nptu.edu.tw)

---