in **PRACTICUM – COMPARATIVE EDUCATION**

www.educatorsabroad.org

Montgomery, Texas USA; Redhill, Surrey England

### PRACTICUM --- COMPARATIVE UNDERSTANDING OF EDUCATION --- GUIDE

The EducatorsAbroad Practicum (EA*Practicum*) provides teacher education students’ opportunity to broaden their experience by completing two to four week school placement requirements in other cultural settings.

EA*Practicum* participants:

* experience education in a community different from that which they know
* support the work of a teacher
* help students learn
* consider
  + their pedagogical development
  + comparative understanding of education, or
  + ability to guide language learning

These placements are open to individuals who can be depended upon to offer professional service in the host school, and whose application is signed by a college advisor or faculty member in teacher education.

**Framework**

As a participant in the EA practicum you are a guest in the host school. Your primary role is to serve the teacher and his/her students while learning about education in another cultural context and developing your abilities as an educator.

You have chosen to **focus on ‘studying’ education and making comparisons between educational systems and approaches** during your practicum placement. In doing this you must be sensitive to the context, beliefs, and values of educators, students, and community members associated with your host school.

To help prevent misunderstandings, approach your experience with an open mind – listen, learn, reflect, then form conclusions.

To assure your comparisons are descriptive, comparative and not judgmental, focus on describing your education and how it might have been different if you had been a student in your host school. This approach will provide understandings when planning instruction for your students.

**Participant Actions**

**Journal**

Keep a record of your travel and school experiences. Write, take photos, audio/video record your reflections on a daily basis. Time will go fast, memories can fade, have a record so you can revisit your experience at later times.

**Prior to travel**

* + 1. Consider your own education, what was the **most important** understanding, skill, attitude, and ability that you learned through your schooling? Record your responses to these sentence stems in your journal.

I have learned that (knowledge): …..

I have learned to (skill): …...

I have come to believe that (attitude): …...

I am able to (ability): ……

Then consider:

* Are these outcomes the most appropriate and of the most value for your own life, for others?
* What should have been the most important lessons the schools should have taught you, everyone?
* Should there be goals of education that are global?
  + 1. Place yourself in this position. A person from another country has asked you to describe the education you have received in your country. What would you say to assure the person understood the approach to education that you encountered?

Then consider:

* How you will remove your preconceptions and come to understand education in your host society from the view of people living in it.
* The difficulty of describing an educational experience and the possible challenges in learning about education in a different cultural context.
* Specific questions you will need to ask to get the information you seek concerning topics, facts, and opinions.

**During your placement – Be Involved**

* In a professional manner, be of service by supporting the work of a teacher through participation in your host school every day and throughout the school day during the assigned placement.
* Establish a plan for participation and follow all rules and procedures of the school. (Practicum participants are not be left alone in charge of class).
* Be active reliable, polite, prompt, cooperative, observant, spontaneous, and energetic as you observe, assist, teach, and reflect.
* Reflect on teaching and the teaching learning process using the observation and question guides.
* Assess your characteristics and qualities in terms of knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become an effective teacher of children and adolescents.
* Journal - maintain a daily record of observations and reflections in your journal. Describe what you did, what you learned, what you concluded about your role as a teacher.

**Toward the end of your placement – Reflect, Record**

* Review your record of observations and reflections and discuss your conclusions with your host teacher.
* Complete the three sentence stems under ‘prior to travel’ again. Compare with your initial responses.
* Complete a self-evaluation of your progress by filling in the Summative Report form. Share and discuss with your mentor teacher.
* Request that your mentor teacher complete and sign a copy of the summative report for your use.

**Observation Guide**

**Some Ideas to Focus Your Classroom Observations:** When an observer of teaching does not know what to look for, it can be difficult to sit and watch lessons for an extended time. Observations become dynamic and worthwhile when the observer knows what to look for and is able to determine how each action impacts student learning.

Finding answers to good questions leads to increased understanding. The questions below are designed to help you focus your observations and come to better understand the complexities of the teaching/learning process. You need to add your questions to the list: what are your questions? What are the answers?

**Class Procedures**

* Are there particular ways that the teacher greets or starts the day with his/her students?
* Attendance, seating chart procedures - how does the teacher take attendance and organize the classroom?
* How does the teacher start class or transition to a new subject topic?
* How is the room arranged, and what is its appearance? How well does this design work?
* What are the classroom routines?
* How is class started and how is it closed?
* In what ways does the teacher maintain classroom organization so students stay on task and accomplish their learning?
* Does the teacher use any particular discipline methods to help student learn to be responsible students?

**Teacher**

* + - Appearance - how does the teacher demonstrate professionalism through appearance?
    - Teacher Voice (volume, clarity, variety, tone) - how does the teacher use inflection, emphasis, etc.?
    - Body language (gestures, movements) - what is the effect of these actions?
    - Spontaneity - how does the teacher adapt to students and situations?
    - Activities/teaching procedures - does the teacher use particular activities in particular circumstances?
    - Directions - how does the teacher provide direction - get student attention?
    - Classroom and instructional management - how does the teacher maintain order?

**Students**

* Does everyone in the class (students, teacher, yourself) know everyone’s name?
* What are your general impressions of the students?
* How do students respond to the teacher and to the course material?
* Are the students passive or actively involved in the lesson?
* What ability levels do you observe among students in the class?
* Do students hold any particular expectations about the level of evaluation that is acceptable to them or their parents?

**Individual Needs**

* Do any students have special needs that require accommodation?
  + - What types of activities or learning are most needed by the students?
    - Are all students learning and improving?
    - How are students with learning difficulties assisted?

**Instructional Process**

* How does the teacher determine what level of learning students are prepared for?
  + - What learning skills are required for each lesson?
* How does the teacher provide age appropriate lessons?
* Does the teacher individualize instruction for any students?
* What types of individualization is used in the classroom?
* How is the approach to teaching this subject the same or different from what you know of this subject in your country?

**Materials - Lesson - Content**

* What resources does the teacherhave available for use at the school?
* How appropriate is the material for the ability of the students?
  + - How much material is covered and/or assigned?
    - What resources are used?
    - Are other resources available?
* Are students or families expected to supply resources?
  + - How prevalent is the use of technology?

**Correcting Assignments, Papers and Tests**

* How does the teacher evaluate or grade student work or progress?
* How often does the teacher assess progress?
* What types of assessments are used (quiz, test, assignments, homework, projects, speeches, etc.)?
* Are students informed of their progress - in what ways?
* Does the teacher feel any pressure in evaluation of student work?
  + - Tests: How long are they? Who designed them? What kinds of questions are asked? What kinds of responses are given? What are the results? What do students need to improve upon?
    - What kind of grading standard is used?

**School & Community**

* How does the school relate to the community it serves?

**Guidelines for Lesson Planning**

Reminder: Practicum participants are NOT to be left in sole charge of a class at any time. But, they should welcome the opportunity to create and teach short lessons in partnership with their host teacher. In preparing a lesson consider the following essential parts of a lesson plan:

1. Lesson Objective. What are the students to learn as a result of this lesson?
2. Learning Activities. What activity will you use to help students achieve the objective?
3. Materials. What materials and or information will you use in the activity?
4. Assessment and Reflection. How will you know that students have learned or met the objective of the lesson?

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