



*2020 Annual Progress Report*

## **IRN ACTIVITIES, ACCOMPLISHMENTS, AND FUTURE PLANS**

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This report summarizes the activities and accomplishments of a WERA IRN, “Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Professional Development for Educators and Effective Teaching” between January and December 2020 and outlines plans for 2021. Using the data collected on how educators perceive the nature and value of their own Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) skills as well as what SEL skills they believe students need in order to compete for decent work and succeed in life (Phase 1), this year the group was able to have a deeper understanding of Empathy – one of the two SEL themes commonly found across all participating countries. The project team further developed their initial findings by publishing their work and presenting at conferences. From January to December 2020, we had 16 virtual meetings as a group and dozens of one-on-one meetings and held two international webinars and a 2-day conference. Five countries presented their findings during the webinars, and 12 countries presented their findings at the conference. Four additional countries joined the network in 2020, including Burkina Faso, Poland, Singapore, and Togo. The group will continue to disseminate its work through webinars, conferences and publications and invite more countries that can represent the voices of diverse populations and cultures.

### **ACTIVITIES**

Led by two conveners, Lea Ferrari (Italy) and V. Scott Solberg (United States), and project coordinator Chong Park (United States), the IRN had 16 virtual group meetings via Zoom from January to December 2020. In response to COVID-19, the team decided to do wellness checks and meet every two weeks between the months of April and August so that we can provide a place for the team members to express their emotions and any psychological concerns and identify any support we can provide as a research community.



This work is being conducted as part of a larger cross-cultural research program referred to as *Connecting Social and Emotional Learning to Professional Development for Educators and Effective Teaching* and is formally recognized by the World Education Research Association as an International Research Network (2019-2022)

During the first quarter of 2020, the IRN initiated International Webinars on SEL and Career Development where each country presented their study findings from Phase 1, as well as their country/cultural context. In preparation of the webinars, the convening teams created a survey to identify the webinar presenters, asking about what stage of research each country was at and when would be an appropriate time for them to share their results at our webinars. They were also asked to identify any resources and support areas that would be helpful in the time of the pandemic. Ten submitted their survey responses – two said that they are refining codes, descriptions, and examples (phase 1), two said that they were identifying items for the quantitative measure (phase 2), three said that they were beginning to create a measure (phase 2), two chose Others. For the second question on the appropriate time for the webinar presentations, two said that they were ready and could present their results soon; two said that they could present in a few weeks; three said that they were willing to present in fall 2020; and three chose Others. As for the resources and support areas, the countries newly joined wanted more support on Phase 1, and the existing teams sought for more support in creating a measure and possibly seeing other countries' examples. There were also concerns about funding, COVID-19 situations and delays. As more countries experienced difficulty with collecting data due to COVID-19, the group decided to hold off on Phase 2 and resume data collection when in-person meetings, surveys, and interviews are possible. Once a list of the webinar presenters were identified, each presenter was provided with some guiding questions: 1) What attracted you to the project?; 2) What were your big takeaways/ were there any surprises?; 3) How are you using the information you have collected?; and 4) What are the accomplishments and your next steps?

In the meantime, the project team decided to focus on the themes that emerged as a critical element in understanding SEL. As the first step, the team conducted a deeper examination on Empathy. A total of seven countries expressed their interest in the Empathy study. As we began meeting every two weeks in April 2020, it was an opportunity for us to have an in-depth conversation on each of the empathy related themes – how the themes coded using the same label are defined differently by country/culture, and how the themes coded under different labels can mean the same thing across different countries/cultures. As a result of an iterative, intensive discussion over the summer, the seven countries came up with seven Empathy clusters, a definition of each cluster, and an overall definition of Empathy. The seven empathy clusters include: Complex Communication Skills, Manage Conflict and Coordinate With Others, Respecting Diversity, Deeper Listening, Compassion, Tolerating Differences, and Appreciating Diversity of Experiences and Perspectives. Based on our consensus, Empathy can be defined as “being a complex communication strategy in which deep listening skills and the ability to express compassion are considered key mechanisms for creating a positive classroom and school environment. In addition, empathy is considered critical in developing the perspective taking skills needed to develop one’s ability to tolerate, respect, and eventually appreciate cultural and individual differences.” A synthesis paper that summarizes the findings has been written and submitted to be included in the WERA Global Perspectives on Education Research.

The researchers from Turkey, Japan, South Africa served on the conference planning committee. They designed the structure and programming of the 2-day conference, invited a discussant for the country presentations, recruited the countries to present during the conference, and provided guiding questions for their presentations. The target audience for this conference

included school counselors, researchers, international associations' members, and journal editors, and the committee reached out to various groups of educators and organizations.

The project group had a year-end meeting in December. The convening team compiled a list of the activities we accomplished together, including webinars, conferences, and publications. Each country also provided their accomplishments in relation to our SEL project and shared resources that can be helpful to other countries. The meeting ended with a list of conferences we plan to attend next year and journals we are hoping to submit our manuscripts.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

The IRN initiated International Webinars on SEL and Career Development where each country presented their study findings and country context. The kick-off webinar was moderated by a senior researcher at the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). The information about the webinars was distributed to our colleagues, university faculty and researchers, and educational leaders, shared with WERA, and posted on our website and LinkedIn. On March 5<sup>th</sup>, three countries – Romania, Japan and Germany- made their presentations, and on May 27<sup>th</sup>, Turkey and South African presented their findings. On November 25<sup>th</sup>, the Romania team held a webinar that focused on SEL and career development and the USA team was invited to present the IRN and the findings from our collective effort.

The group also designed a 2-day mini conference scheduled for September 10<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup>. Research teams presented the results of the first year study, dissemination work in relation to the projects (papers, policy briefs, projects, and community/government involvement), the effects of the 1<sup>st</sup> year project results, and the progress of the second year of the project. The countries that recently joined the network presented regarding SEL education in their country – cultural, socio-political, and historical contexts and any changes in SEL education and career development in response to COVID-19. On Day 1, five countries – Romania, South Africa, Turkey, Togo, and Burkina Faso – presented on SEL in Context and/or the SEL study findings. Four countries – Romania, South Africa, USA, and Turkey also gave short presentations on the findings from the Empathy study. On Day 2, seven countries – Greece, Japan, Italy, USA, Korea, China, and Singapore – presented SEL in Context and/or the SEL study findings. Three countries – Greece, Japan, and Italy also gave short presentations on the findings from the Empathy study.

Below is a list of our project-related individual accomplishments between January and December 2020:

### **Conference Presentations**

- June 18-19, 2020  
10th International Conference The Future of Education -Virtual Edition, Florence, Italy.  
Ferrari, L. & Solberg, S. An International Research Network to Connect Social Emotional Learning and Career Development.
- July 9, 2020  
Network4Careers Annual Summer Conference 2020, Canterbury Christ Church University, UK.  
Ferrari, L., Socio-emotional learning and career development
- Sep 8th - Nov 2nd, 2020

The 84th Annual Convention of the Japanese Psychological Association.  
Kanzaki, M. & Suzuki, H. Social and emotional learning in Japanese educational contexts: School teachers' perspectives in multinational qualitative study.

### **Publications - published**

- Solberg, V. S., Park, C. & Marsay, G. (2020). Designing Future Readiness Programs For High Need, High Opportunity Youth: Recommendations For Shifting Perspective And Practice. *Journal of Career Assessment*.
- Ferrari, L. & Solberg, S. (2020). An International Research Network to Connect Social Emotional Learning and Career Development. In Pixel (Eds.), 10th International Conference The Future of Education -Virtual Edition Conference Proceedings (571-574). Florence: Filo Dritto.
- Andrei, A. (coord).(2020). Counseling programs and activities for the development of students' socio-emotional skills. Guide for school counselors . Vol. I, II and III, for primary, secondary, high school / vocational education and training. Bucharest: Editura Didactica si Pedagogica. Available at:  
<https://educatiacontinua.edu.ro/ghid-de-consiliere.htm>
- Karacan-Ozdemir, N. & Bacanlı, F. (2020). Sosyal duygusal öğrenme becerileri ve kariyer gelişimi: Öğretmen ve psikolojik danışman rolleri [Social emotional learning skills and career development: The roles of teachers and school counselors]. *Milli Eğitim*, 49(226), 323-344 . (In Turkish)
- Marsay, Gloria (2020).  
<https://thoughtleader.co.za/psyssa/2020/04/24/now-more-than-ever-we-need-social-and-emotional-learning-skills-interventions/>  
<https://thoughtleader.co.za/psyssa/2020/01/20/social-and-emotional-skills-will-improve-education-and-grow-our-economy/>

### **Publications - full manuscript under review**

- Kounenou, K., Kourmousi, N., Ferrari, L., Suzuki, H., Kanzaki, M., Andrei, A., Scoda, A-D., Marsay, G., Bacanlı, F., Karacan Ozdemir, N., Park, C. & Solberg, V. S. H. (in press). The Role of Empathy in Improving SEL Skills Among Educators and Students in Era of COVID-19. World Education Research Association, *Global Perspectives on Education Research*. Routledge Press.
- Karacan-Ozdemir, N. & Büyükçolpan, H. (under review). A Scale Development Study: Social Emotional Learning Scale-Young Adult Form. *Kastamonu Education Journal*. (In Turkish)
- Marsay, G., Atitsogbe, K. A., Ouedraogo, A., Nsubuga, H., Paboussoum, P., Yawavi, K. E., Park, C. & Solberg, V. S. (under review). The Importance of Social Emotional Learning Skills in Assisting Youth to Successfully Transition into the World of Work. *African Journal of Career Development*.
- Xinghua (Howard) Qi. (under review). Triple comparison- A new perspective of international comparison in higher education studies. Abstract:  
<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TXIBOZ32bVQWfIAJU194RsQzNqaC2UIX/edit>

## **FUTURE PLANS (2021-2022)**

Our dissemination effort via webinars and conferences led us to partner with a researcher-practitioner network, [NISSEM](#). Two convenors of the group, Margaret Sinclair and Andy Smart reached out to us after attending our webinars. The IRN plans to submit three articles to be included in the NISSEM global briefs on SEL (2021). This year, our collective effort allowed us to have more countries to join the network, including Burkina Faso, Poland, Singapore, and Togo. Burkina Faso and Togo responded quickly to the resources we provided and were able to collect data on educators' perception on SEL. We have already submitted a manuscript together which is under review. The IRN will continue to conduct more outreach throughout the year to reflect the voices of diverse countries and cultures. Led by our Japanese colleague, Hana Suzuki, an international network for students was also created which operates similar to our IRN but is managed autonomously by the participating students regarding their activities. The participants were recruited via the IRN members who advise undergraduate and graduate students. More activities, such as webinars and conferences focused on students, will be planned in 2021.

Although our Phase 2 research has been postponed due to COVID-19, the IRN plans to keep supporting each other virtually and stay active in disseminating our work via webinars, conferences, and publications. We have also submitted a symposium proposal to present at the WERA Focal Meeting. Some of the country teams have already begun identifying SEL items in preparation of Phase 2 that would help us create a new SEL measure that is culturally competent and responsive to the changing workplace. In 2020, the IRN was actively engaged in the discussion of helping educators and youth to gain the “deeper human” and “advanced technical skills,” which are highly demanded in the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. We will continue to be responsive to the changing paradigm in career development and skills demand in the workplace and work on translating research into practice.