Leave or Remain Silent: A Study of Parents' Views on Social-Emotional Learning in Chinese Schools

Authors : Pei Wang

Abstract : The concept of social-emotional learning (SEL) is becoming increasingly popular in both research and practical applications worldwide. However, there is a lack of empirical studies and implementation of SEL in China, particularly from the perspective of parents. This qualitative study examined how Chinese parents perceived SEL, how their views on SEL were shaped, and how these views affected their decisions regarding their children's education programs. Using the Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning Interactive Wheel framework and Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory, the study conducted interviews with eight parents whose children attended public, international, and private schools in China. All collected data were conducted a thematic analysis involving three coding phases. The findings revealed that interviewees perceived SEL as significant to children's development but held diverse understandings and perspectives on SEL at school depending on the amount and the quality of SEL resources available in their children's schools. Additionally, parents' attitudes towards the exam-oriented education system and Chinese culture influenced their views on SEL in school. Nevertheless, their socioeconomic status (SES) was the most significant factor in their perspectives on SEL, which significantly impacted their choices in their children's educational programs. High-SES families had more options to pursue SEL resources by sending their children to international schools or Western countries, while lower middle-class SES families had limited SEL resources in public schools. This highlighted educational inequality in China and emphasized the need for greater attention and investment in SEL programs in Chinese public schools.
Keywords : Chinese, inequality, parent, school, social-emotional learning
Conference Title : ICHD 2024 : International Conference on Human Development
Conference Location : Toronto, Canada
Conference Dates : July 18-19, 2024