

# The Influences of Intensive Practicum on Teaching Efficacy Level of Senior Students Majoring in Special Education

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The purpose of this study was to understand the impacts of intensive practicum on teaching efficacy level of senior students who were special education major in Taiwan. The theory of efficacy belief in social learning theory was used as theory based, and focus group interview as well as documentation analysis were used for research design in the study. Participants were 40 senior students who were taking educational practicum course during their last semester in college. In this course, participants had to complete 3 weeks intensive practicum either in resource rooms or in self-contained special education classrooms of elementary schools in order to fulfill the course requirements. Data collection was accomplished through focus group interviews and documentations (practicum journal, teaching design, reflective writing, and etc.). The findings from this study indicated that practicum mentors were the main resource and support for promoting teaching efficacy level of participants. All participants agreed that intensive practicum was an important process not only for promoting their teaching efficacy level, but also for developing their professional attitudes. Furthermore, the following findings were concluded as well:

1. Participants practiced their teaching skills by conducting lessons and managing students' behavioral problems. The more successful experiences they had, the more self confidence they got. Through enactive mastery experiences, their teaching efficacy level had been promoted.
2. Participants learned by observing practicum mentors performed effective teaching methods and applying these methods in their own teaching. Participants who had more chances to observe practicum mentors' teaching, the higher efficacy level they had.
3. The more feedbacks and encouragements practicum mentors gave to participants, the higher efficacy level the participants got. "When my mentor told me that I can do it, I feel so confident to do whatever I'm going to do." said by a participant.
4. Participants felt very stressful at the first week of intensive practicum, because they were unfamiliar to students and class routines. Some of them even cried out after demonstrating their teaching to mentors. However, most of participants got used to work as a "real teacher" since the second week of practicum.
5. Through the trainings of intensive practicum, participants knew better about

themselves, knew how to overcome frustration, and knew how to handle difficulties.

6. Neither the settings (resource room or self-contained special education classroom) nor the categories of disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities, emotional/behavioral disorders, mental retardation, autism and multiple disabilities) had negative influence on the teaching efficacy level of participants.