Translating Human Development Research Into Practice Notes From the Field

By Koenig

Introduction:

Adolescence is a critical stage in human development. It is the time when one's identity and relationship to society truly begin to take shape, and the decisions that educators make when working with adolescents can help determine the life course. I have had the privilege of engaging with this essential moment in people's lives in a variety of professional contexts, as a teacher, a researcher, a volunteer, and, since fall 2020, as a doctoral student in Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago. In the course of my doctoral studies, I have been able to more substantively engage with the critical role that social context plays in one's moral, behavioral, and cognitive development. When I became aware of the Advancing Education in Muslim Societies (AEMS) research agenda and its groundbreaking report, "Mapping the Terrain," which surveys young people and educators in 15 Muslim societies on a host of Social Emotional Learning skills with the goal to identify what causes social transformation and personal change, I was immediately intrigued. Over the last six months I have been lucky enough to partner with the AEMS team to share the field-based knowledge gained on positive human attributes and to shape the study's reach by highlighting implications for education policy and practice. Through this work I have connected with researchers from all over the world. I am excited to share some of my learnings from the study's report and my time in and around classrooms with the readers of the Journal of Education in Muslim Societies and to contribute what little I can to a movement that incorporates human development research into the day-to-day experiences of educators, students, and families (see https://iiit.org/en/mapping-the-terrain/ for the full report).

Alex Koenig is a doctoral student in the department of Comparative Human Development at the University of Chicago. He is a graduate fellow in the interdisciplinary Committee on Education and a researcher with the Trauma Responsive Educational Practices (TREP) Project. Alex's research focuses on applying mixed methods to investigate com-munity involvement in school budgeting and long-term planning, how newcomers are integrated into schools, and exploring whether the school system interrupts or reproduces existing social inequality. Since April 2021, Alex has been a non-resident Fellow in Human Development and Education Policy with The Advancing Education in Muslim Societies (AEMS) team with the International Institute of Islamic Thought. Before starting his graduate studies, Alex was a fifth-grade teacher in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and a school data officer in Boston, Massachusetts. He holds a B.A. in Social Studies with a focus on American Public Education from Harvard University.