

## Research Visit at IEA Hamburg

*Zhijun Chen*

*Ph.D. student at University of Bath*

I began my three-month Academic Visit with RandA (Research and Analysis Unit) based at IEA's Hamburg office in July 2022. The visit was a great experience, which provided a host of opportunities to investigate my research interests supported by experts at IEA. I really enjoyed my time exploring the city of Hamburg.

I completed the preliminary analysis for my first paper using TIMSS data when my supervisor, Andres Sandoval Hernandez (University of Bath), recommended the IEA Academic Visitor Program. A research visit could build my understanding of large-scale assessments, their technical, and methodological aspects.

I set goals before my research visit. One of the goals was to develop my first paper within my Ph.D. framework, which aims to investigate the effective teaching practices from TIMSS data to address educational inequalities. The second goal was to use the professional support available at RandA to help develop my knowledge and skills in analyzing and interpreting large-scale assessment data.

While at IEA, I drafted the first paper for my Ph.D. with the support of Rolf Strietholt and Ana Maria Mejia-Rodriguez. We met regularly to evaluate the research questions, the interpretation of my data analysis, and the structure of my paper. We also developed an abstract that follows Teig, Scherer, and Nilsen's paper from 2018, looking at the impact of inquiry-based teaching on the SES (social-economic status) achievement gap, assuming a non-linear relationship between teaching quality and science achievement. The Large-Scale Cross-National Studies in Education SIG (Special Interest Group) accepted the abstract at CIES 2023 (Comparative and International Education Society). I was very thankful for all the support, feedback, and exciting discussions with Rolf and Ana Maria. We are still working on these projects for further publication.

As an early-career researcher, I am encouraged and motivated by the enthusiasm and passion IEA's researchers demonstrate in their daily work and fruitful debates on a wide range of cutting-edge research topics. I gave two presentations at colloquiums and workshops. The first was to introduce my proposed study at the beginning of my visit. The second was to summarize my research progress at IEA and report significant outcomes.

IEA hosted social events, including lunches, dinners, and the IEA summer party in Hamburg where I also met colleagues from the Amsterdam office. The social events made me feel welcome at IEA and a part of the team. I have built new contacts and have made good friends.

There are those I would like to thank for helping me realize such an incredible journey at IEA. First, I want to thank my supervisor Andres Sandoval Hernandez who suggested this research visit and Santander bank, who supported my visit financially via the postgraduate mobility award. Aysel Gojayeva and Andrés Strello provided logistical support before my research visit and a great introductory program which helped me quickly adapt to the new culture and working environment. I would also like to thank Rolf Strietholt and Ana-Maria Mejia-Rodriguez, who have been good hosts and supported my research, Alec Kennedy, who talked through technical issues with me, and fellow research scholars, Jina Kim and Ioulia Televantou, who explored the city with me. Other IEA researchers who made me feel welcome include Sabine Meinck, Minge Chen, Andrés Christiansen, Umut Atasever, Max Romero, Pablo Iribarra, Mojca Rozamn, Diego Cortes, Valentina Toloza, Chennhe Lee, Jonathan Linden, Nayeli Urdiales. I feel lucky to have had the opportunity to get to know all these great people and complete my visit supported by their kindness and support.

Lastly, I want to thank IEA for providing such an invaluable opportunity. These three months have been an unforgettable experience that equipped me with professional knowledge and skills for my future academic career. I hope to meet again and continue our collaboration in the future.

### ***About the Author***

Zhijun Chen obtained a bachelor's degree in E-commerce and Finance from the University of International Business and Economics and a master's degree in Psychology at the University of St Andrews in Scotland. She continued her academic career a research assistant at the Hong Kong Baptist University and the Education University of Hong Kong. She is currently a Ph.D. student at the Department of Education at the University of Bath. Her research interests include educational inequality, teaching effectiveness, teaching evaluation, and classroom observation.