

The Newly Launched WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION

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Research Topic

From childhood to adolescence, young people enroll in various public or private forms of educational arrangements outside regular school time. They participate in school- or community-based programs, forms of private tutoring, or after-school activities like art courses, or they attend extracurricular activities at all-day schools.

In learning societies today there has been an increase in out-of-school and extracurricular learning in childhood and in adolescence compared to the past. The last 10 to 20 years have seen numerous efforts to expand institutional learning and care opportunities to supplement (traditional) schooling in almost every modern country in Europe, North and South America, Asia, and Australia.

In all of these continents and countries, these activities and programs focus on the social, emotional, and/or academic development of children and young people and are educationally structured to make it easier for the participants to learn specific contents.

Extended education programs have many common institutional features as well as a number of parallel education-related pedagogical problems, regardless of whether they are extracurricular activities at German all-day schools, summer camps in the United States, or activities at Swedish leisure-time centers, for example. Thus, international research focuses on similar problems and similar features of these educational settings. In the following, we outline two of these features:

(1) As with classroom teaching, activities in the area of extended education are (as a rule) educational settings that are designed by adults that are (often) supervised by schools or community institutions and focus on definable – albeit broad and certainly diverging – learning goals in both the cognitive and psychosocial areas (support orientation of programs and activities). These activities and programs differ from classroom teaching in that: (a) they are not necessarily taught by regular classroom teachers in most countries, (b) there is generally no performance assessment with grades, (c) in some cases they are organized in mixed-aged groups, (d) partic-

ipation is usually voluntary (optional character), (e) they are usually only subject to a low level of curricular requirements, and (f) they often offer children and youths more freedom of choice and opportunities to participate than school does. Thus, among other things, extended education activities open up new and different possibilities for learning and development within but also outside curriculum-mandated school topic areas and subjects.

(2) Additional collaboration between schools and out-of-school partners, which are often part of out-of-school activities, helps strengthen the lifeworld-orientation and takes interests and aptitudes of students better into account.

Network for Research on Out-of-School Time and Extracurricular Educational Research (NEO-ER)

In recent years a high demand for scientific information in the field of extended education has risen with the extensive implementation of these state and private programs and activities. For example the effectiveness of these activities and programs, their successful pedagogical design (quality) and also possible consequences for education policy are brought into focus. While educational research in several countries increasingly deals with the potential and problem areas of those activities referred to as “extended education”, so far there has been no continuous exchange on an international level especially of scientific information in this field.

The first steps have gone to establish this research field in 2010. An international network with a group of international experts was launched, the *Network for Research on Out-of-School Time and Extracurricular Educational Research* (NEO-ER). Today, this network comprises experts from Germany, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden, UK, USA, South Korea, Japan, Taiwan and Australia. Since 2010 this group organized four international conferences (two in Giessen, Germany and two in Seoul, South Korea; we reported on these conferences in the IJREE) and published an international volume on research on extended education (Ecarius et al., 2013). In 2013 we launched the *International Journal for Research on Extended Education* (funded by the German Research Council) and organized an international workshop for postgraduate researchers in this field in 2016 at the University of Marburg in cooperation with the University of Giessen, Germany, by Prof. Dr. Ludwig Stecher, Prof. Dr. Sabine Maschke and Prof. Dr. Ivo Züchner (see the short report in this issue). The workshop was funded by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research.

To strengthen and to broaden the bases of international collaboration in the research field of extended education furthermore and to synthesize the state of research worldwide the NEO-ER group applied for becoming an International Research Network within the World Education Research Association (WERA). The application was successful. In April 2017 the NEO-ER network turned into the WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION. The organizers of the WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION are Marianne Schüpbach, University of Bamberg and Ludwig Stecher,

University of Giessen. The new WERA-IRN is a collaborative group of scholars working on this research topic.

The WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION

World Education Research Association (WERA) is an association of major national, regional, and specialty education research associations, among other things dedicated to developing networks (see <http://www.weraonline.org/>). The purpose of *International Research Networks* (IRNs) is to advance education research worldwide on specific scholarly topics.

From November 30, until December, 2, 2017 the first WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION Conference *Extended Education from an International Comparative Point of View*, was organized at the University of Bamberg, Germany. We will report about the conference in the next issue of the IJREE. The aim was to bring together different research perspectives, to synthesize the state of research worldwide in this new field of EXTENDED EDUCATION, and to initiate an international research direction on a comparative point of view (Congress website: <https://www.uni-bamberg.de/grundschulpaed/extended-education-2017>). In Bamberg the first business meeting of the new WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION has been taking place. Join the WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION at <https://wera.site-ym.com/page/ExtendedEducation>.

References

Ecarius, J.; Klieme, E.; Stecher, L. & Woods, J. (Eds.), *Extended Education – in an International Perspective*. Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich.