

# Extended Education – Some Considerations on a Growing Research Field

Ludwig Stecher<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** In most modern countries, much learning in childhood and adolescence takes place outside of regular school hours. That holds for community-based programs – like afterschool programs – as well as for private offerings – like private tutoring. In the international research literature, this field of learning opportunity is called extended education. This article attempts to define the term, extended education, and to describe in some detail the common features of extended education programs and activities, focusing among other things on questions of methods, outcomes and professionals working in this field. The article addresses additionally the question whether learning in the field of extended education decreases social inequality, or, on the contrary, widens the social gap. The most important conclusion is that many relevant questions regarding social inequality and the effectiveness of extended education are still empirically open to research.

**Keywords:** Extended education, learning society, learning opportunities, social inequality, family socio-reproduction strategies

## Introduction

We are living, as Antikainen and colleagues put it (Antikainen et al., 1996), in a learning society. Learning societies are not only characterized by a rise in the level of formal education, but also by an increase of out-of-school and extracurricular learning in childhood and adolescence, when compared to the past. We can take after-school programs in the US and in South Korea, Swedish school-age educare centers, or German all-day schools as examples (see main topic in IJREE 1/2018). Aside from these – *state-run* and official – educational programs and initiatives, a *private* market for out-of-school education has been established in most countries as well (Bray, 2007). Wrapping up the current situation, it is safe to say that in most modern countries a lot of learning during childhood and adolescence takes place outside regular classroom teaching – or as Sefton-Green (2013) put it: A lot of learn-

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ing takes place at not-school. In the last ten years or so, the term *extended education* has been established to encompass this educational area.

Besides the fact that the term extended education has, step by step, been entrenched in the scientific and public debates, the term has remained somehow diffuse. This refers among other things to the lack of a clear definition of the term, to the lack of a far-reaching description of what kind of activities are object to research and to an uncertainty concerning which scientific disciplines are needed to deal with the various research questions arising in this field. In this article I will try to provide some answers to these questions in two steps. In the first step the article will offer a definition of the term, extended education, and discuss in short which implications the given definition has regarding research objectives and the involvement of various scientific disciplines.

In a second step I will delve deeper into the specific characteristics of extended education and address the question concerning what we mean if we say that extended education is 'extending' regular classroom teaching. These aspects have various implications, not only for putting extended education programs and activities into practice, but also for designing research projects.

## What Belongs to the Field of Extended Education?

Browsing through international research literature, many different terms can be found referring to learning contexts and opportunities outside regular classroom teaching – after-school programs (Scott-Little, Hamann, & Jurs, 2002), after-school education (Noam, Biancarosa, & Dechausay, 2003), extra curricular activities (Eccles et al., 2003; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005), organized activities (Mahoney, Larson, & Eccles, 2005), or structured informal contexts (Vadeboncoeur, 2006). In Germany we talk about non-formal learning contexts (Maschke & Stecher, 2017; Rauschenbach et al., 2004), school-based extra curricular activities (at all-day schools; Fischer & Theis, 2014), out-of-school education (Trautwein & Wild, 2009; Stecher, 2010) or all-day education [Ganztagsbildung] (Coelen & Otto, 2008a, b).

On the one hand, all of these terms refer to provisions which supplement classroom teaching by extending the opportunities for young people to learn. On the other hand, they refer to – though sometimes only slightly – different learning situations or settings within or out of school. From my point of view, a term used to encompass the whole research field has to include both aspects: Firstly, that it is about learning or education (in a broad sense), respectively, and, secondly, that it is about a broad array of various learning provisions within or out of school. From my perspective, the term 'extended education' covers both aspects very well.

So from my point of view – at least for the German context, but possibly internationally as well – it makes sense to use this term. At the beginning of this decade in Germany, the term extended education was kind of a new 'brand' but has since been established in the scientific discussion.

## A Definition

But how can we define extended education? Based on some articles colleagues and I wrote concerning extended education and its characteristics as a learning context outside the classroom, I would suggest the following definition:

The field of extended education encompasses all “activities and programs which are (1) based on a *pedagogic intention* and *organized* to (2) facilitate learning and educational processes of children and adolescents (3) not (completely) covered by school curriculum-based learning and (4) which aim at fostering academic achievement, (5) success at school, or (6) in general to accumulate cultural capital in the broader sense.” (Stecher, Maschke, & Preis, 2018)

From my point of view, these six points together characterize the main aspects of the field of extended education. The first aspect (1) refers to the fact that we would expect in most cases that the learning situation is designed and organized based on pedagogical principles (such as principles of learning, principles of participation, of learner motivation, etc.) aiming at enabling and facilitating learning processes (2). Though provisions in the field of extended education can be narrowly focused on academic *curricular* contents like math and language – see for example private tutoring –, some of them focus on contents expanding or exceeding the academic curriculum (like dancing, drama, cooking, trendy sports, etc. (3)). The goals of the programs are fostering academic achievement, success at school, and education in a broad, holistic sense (Bae; encompassed by the German term ‘Bildung’) – or, to put it in a less ambiguous and more human capital oriented sense: fostering the accumulation of ‘cultural capital’ (sensu Bourdieu; 4 to 6).

There are at least two main perspectives that can be derived from this definition: Firstly, with regard to the viewpoint that extended education programs and activities are intentionally designed and goal-oriented, they are generally open to questions of educational quality, educational effectiveness and educational efficacy. In this sense, research on extended education in some respects is very similar to research on school-based learning processes and can be based on models and findings in this research area (Stecher & Maschke, 2013<sup>2</sup>).

The second aspect refers to social inequality. On the one hand, from a *community and school-based* point of view, the additional offers in the field of extended education can be seen as comprehensive efforts to expand and develop public learning opportunities, in particular to foster low performing students and students with a low socioeconomic and/or low educational family background. Programs like the German investment program, A Future for Education and Care (IZBB), can be taken as examples of this type of extended education effort. Within this particular example, the development of German all-day schools was supported by the German Federal Ministry of Education and the Research (BMBF) with four billion Euros. One aim of this program was to foster in particular students with low academic performance and students with a low socioeconomic family background (Holtapels, 2005). In this sense, *extended education provisions are part of the fight against social and educational inequality* (Bae & Jeon, 2013; Steiner, 2016). On the other hand, we can look at the field of extended education from the students’ and families’ point of view, respectively. From this perspective, extended education options can be seen as part of the

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2 In addition, there are some differences to be noted (see Stecher, Maschke, & Preis, 2018).

families' socioeconomic reproduction strategies (Stecher & Preis, 2013). Take for example the German case. With the decreasing return [Rendite] of formal education certificates during the last circa forty to fifty years, the importance of additional education and further training outside the classroom and outside the school has increased (Krämer, 1998). And thus, as part of the changing social (re)production conditions in general, parental reproduction strategies face adjustment pressures as well, in particular with a view to the accumulation of cultural capital and the associated status advantages for their children. In other countries, this pressure is further aggravated by the restricted access to prestigious academic careers (for example the restricted access to prestigious universities, as is often the case in Asian countries). From this point of view, different profiles of extended education provisions used by the families can widen the social gap (Zinnecker, 1994).

Whether extended education reduces or expands the social gap is a question only empirical research can answer.

## Extended Education as an Interdisciplinary Field of Research

From my point of view, it is evident that research on extended education is per se interdisciplinary. For example, to give an answer to the question which programs and activities are effective with regard to student outcomes, we need psychological research that is competency-oriented (as mentioned before, we can base our research on classroom research that is in particular focused on pedagogic psychology [Pädagogische Psychologie]). To give an answer to the question how effective programs should be designed, we need intervention studies – a focus of pedagogic psychology as well as empirical educational research.

To address the aforementioned question whether extended education programs narrow or widen the social gap, we need research that takes into account effects of participating in extended education activities on the macro level of society. That is the specialty of the field of sociological research. To answer the question which societal role extended education plays with regard to the economy of a country – for example if we look at the private sector of extended education – we need economic science.

In as far as extended education defines a broad field of research, the relevant questions cannot be answered only from the point of view of one scientific discipline, based on only one methodological perspective, and by focusing either on the micro perspective of learning or on the macro perspective of societal developments. All these perspectives and methods must be brought together to shed light on the research field of extended education as a whole.

## Extended Education – Extension of What?

In the description and aforementioned definition of what extended education is, we used classroom teaching and learning as a kind of comparative template. Based on this template we can describe the meaning of 'extended' in more detail. I will explain that with regard to four aspects or dimensions: *time* (extended time frame), *methods* (how learning is designed), *content* and *outcomes* (what content is taught, which outcomes the activities aim

at), and who is teaching/instructing. In the following I will discuss some of the expectations that are interlinked with these aspects. The following explanations should be treated as hypotheses, not as descriptions of real practice.

## Time

Participating in extended education provisions prolongs the time provided for learning processes. The underlying expectation is that the more additional time children and adolescents spend on learning tasks, the better the respective outcome will be – taking the educational quality of the activity into consideration. From this point of view, ‘extended’ means an extension of learning time – or, to use the scientific language of pedagogic psychology, an extension of time on task (Stecher et al., 2009, p. 188).

## Methods

In as far as extended education provisions do not underlie traditional classroom regulations regarding methods and didactics – for example, instructors in extended education provisions are not forced to evaluate the learning process of participants based on grades, as teachers are forced to – it can be expected that instructors have more freedom to create their own ways of teaching. Thus, methods can be used which are based on a participatory approach (involving the participants’ view on methods and their own way of learning), which are based on arts and cultural education (freedom of individual creativity), on group learning/peer learning processes or even on outdoor education. From this point of view, ‘extended’ means an extension of teaching methods and learning strategies put into practice (see also the following section).

These new methods and strategies, based among other things on the self-determination theory of Deci and Ryan (1993; Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 2001) should activate learners in a new and powerful way and strengthen their motivation to learn (Stecher et al., 2009, pp. 190f.). With regard to the German all-day school debate, researchers expect that a new culture of teaching and learning could be established out of traditional classroom learning (Horstkemper & Tillmann, 2014).

## Content/Outcomes

As mentioned before, extended education refers to learning contents not (completely) covered by school curriculum based learning. This means that, parallel to extending classroom content, the outcome perspective on learning processes shifts from academic achievement outcomes, in a stricter sense, to a broader variety of additional or alternative outcomes. As Klerfelt describes for Swedish school-age educare centers: The outcomes of learning processes are focused in school-age educare on “the children’s imagination and ability to learn together with others through play, physical activities and art, and includes aesthetic learning processes as well as exploratory and practical learning processes.” (Klerfelt & Stecher, 2018) The outcomes that all-day schooling in Germany aim at are, for example, cultural learning (including drama and music), social and intercultural learning, the individual development of effective learning strategies (for example self-directed learning) or the development of physical health and health consciousness.

This content-related opening can help to adapt content to the desires and individual interests of students and, therefore, foster student engagement and motivation for learning (Stecher et al., 2009, p. 191).

### Who is Teaching/Instructing?

Let us take German all-day schools as an example. Whilst classroom teaching is invariably done by teachers (with a teacher degree), extracurricular activities are provided partly by teachers, partly by other professionals (like social pedagogues), semi-professionals (like sports coaches), and laymen. There are nearly no common regulations with regard to the qualification of additional instructing personnel in Germany (Klerfelt & Stecher, 2018). Figures from 2009 show that 39 % of additional instructing personnel do not have a pedagogical degree at all (Coelen & Rother, 2014, p. 133). Independent of the – serious – question whether all personnel members at German all-day schools are well trained for their job, ‘extended’ means that the participants are exposed, not only to teacher profession, but also to other professional perspectives as well (for an overview, see the main topic on staff professionalism in *IJREE* 1/2016, edited by Marianne Schüpbach). This ‘opening of the school toward new professions’ (Holtappels, Krinecki, & Menke, 2013, p. 47) could lead to a more diversified teaching and learning culture at (German) all-day schools that enables new learning experiences for the students and that fosters the individuals’ development based on a multi-professional approach. As research has shown, students at German all-day schools say that their relationship to the instructors working at their school in the extracurricular area is more supportive and more positive than their relationship with teachers in the classroom (Radisch et al., 2008).

### Conclusion

What conclusions can be drawn from this short paper? In my view, it is irrefutable that extended education is becoming more and more important when discussing the effectiveness of modern educational systems from a holistic perspective. If we look at the features of extended education which differentiate it from traditional classroom teaching – with regard to time, methods, content/outcome, and teaching personnel –, it is not unreasonable to expect that participating in extended education provisions has the potential to foster individual learning processes in a new way – taking educational quality of provisions into consideration. From this point of view, extended education may have the potential to decrease educational and social inequality – if all students from all socioeconomic backgrounds have free access to, and are willing to participate in, such programs. However, we have also argued that families with a high socioeconomic or education status can derive specific advantages from these additional learning opportunities to foster their children’s academic achievement. That holds true in particular with regard to (expensive) private learning offerings. From this point of view, extended education becomes part of the families’ social reproduction strategies that will only widen social inequality. Whether extended education reduces or widens the social gap remains empirically unanswered.

This leads to the most important conclusion of this article – that many questions regarding the effectiveness and the societal effects of extended education remain yet unanswered, and that further empirical research will remain highly crucial in the near future. Furthermore, in order to improve our mutual understanding and knowledge, we need above all international comparative research in this area – as has been done for classroom learning since FIMS/SIMS/TIMSS, PEARLS, or PISA. This research will show the extent to which the success of modern societies is based on learning outside the classroom – and I am sure that part will not be a small one.

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