

Editorial

Many countries now place an increasing importance on activities that support learning and academic achievement outside of the formal school day. Examples include extracurricular activities at schools, sport and academic clubs, after-school activities or community based programmes. In parallel with the increasing demand for the extended education these activities provide, both public and private funding to support these programmes has risen continuously in recent years.

In several countries these out-of-school and extracurricular educational activities are studied as non-formal learning contexts/opportunities, designed activities, extracurricular activities or organised activities. Since all these terms and concepts refer to the extension or supplementation of traditional educational institutions and their forms of instruction such as 'classical' classroom teaching in schools, the term '*extended education*' has established itself internationally for this field of education.

Although the goal and organisation of such extended education programmes vary from country to country, they have many common institutional features as well as a number of parallel education-related pedagogical problems regardless of whether they are for example extracurricular activities at German all-day schools, summer camps in the United States or the activities at Swedish leisure-time centres. Thus, international research focusses on similar problems and similar features of these educational settings. Overall research can best be described by how they differ from formal educational activities.

As with classroom teaching, activities in the area of extended education are (as a rule) a pedagogical setting designed by adults which is (often) supervised by schools or community institutions and focused on definable – albeit broad and certainly diverging – learning goals both in the cognitive as well as psychology, socio-emotional, and health and fitness (*support orientation* of programmes and activities).

Extracurricular and out-of-school activities allow for, among other things, new and different possibilities for learning and development within but also outside curriculum-mandated school topic areas and subjects. Cooperation and collaboration between schools and out-of school partners which are often part of out-of-school activities additionally usually helps strengthen the lifeworld-orientation and take the interests and aptitudes of students better into account.

In recent years a high demand for scientific information in the area of extended education has risen with the extensive implementation of such state and private programmes and activities. For example the effectiveness of such activities and programmes, 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. After the initiation of an international research network on extended education in

November 2010, another building block to further establish this field of educational research now follows with the launch of the International Journal for Research on Extended Education, which is supported by the German Research Foundation (DFG)

The aims and purpose of the new journal is to create international visibility and a stronger scientific profile for the research field of extended education. The International Journal for Research on Extended Education is published by a group of internationally renowned educational researchers. To ensure a high scientific standard it is subject to a rigorous peer review process. Theoretical papers, basic empirical research, and applied research aimed at addressing practical and policy issues are welcome from researchers from the widest range of disciplines including psychology, education, sociology, political science, and education economics.

The first issue of the International Journal for Research on Extended Education focuses on an overview of national programs concerning the research on, and implementation of, out-of-school education. This overview of national reports will be concluded in the second issue of the IJREE.

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