

## Expanding the Horizon of Research in Extended Education: Perspective, Fields, and Methods

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### Introduction

No matter what it is called, extended education is worldwide becoming one of the fastest growing areas in education systems. A variety of programs exists from early childhood to adult education levels. Some programs are publicly funded and implemented at public spaces, while others are run mainly for profits by private vendors – for instance, for-profit supplementary private tutoring. Extended education, often called extracurricular activities, differs from regular curricular activities in many aspects (see e.g. Kielblock & Monsen, 2016). Major differences include when and where educational programs are offered. More specifically, extended education is in general provided out of school time and outside regular classes.

However, there seems to be no big difference between the two in that both by nature involve teaching and learning processes, interactions between educators and students, administrative supports, the staff, etc. Above all, both of them ultimately share the goal, seeking for growth and development of participants. Nevertheless, while a countless number of studies have conducted in the traditional field – i.e., regular curricular activities in the public schooling setting, fewer attention has been given to extended education. In other words, extended education has been under-researched.

In 2016, NEO ER, *the Network on Extracurricular and Out-of-School Time Educational Research*, hosted the fourth meeting in Seoul with the theme of ‘*Expanding the horizon of research in extended education: Perspective, fields, and methods.*’ Participants presented what areas have been unnoticed, less studied and unfound in this area. In addition, presentations and discussion were made about new perspectives for research, less-investigated fields, and effective methods that may well be used for research in extended education. This paper aimed to critically review and synthesize what was presented and discussed during the conference. The paper also suggested implications for future research.

## The 4<sup>th</sup> Meeting of NEO ER

NEO ER is an international research network with researchers and professionals in the field of extended education. Since it was formed at the 2010 Giessen, Germany meeting with the topic of *'Extended Education: An International Perspective'*, it has taken an academic leadership role in this field. One product of the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting in Giessen was the book published in 2013 – *Extended education: An international perspective, Proceedings of the international conference on extracurricular and out of school time education research* (Ecarius et al., 2013). In 2013, NEO ER also launched an internationally refereed journal, *the International Journal for Research on Extended Education* (IJREE)<sup>1</sup>. Since then, the journal has been published twice a year and is now internationally recognized as the unique academic journal in the field of extended education.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting was again held at the Justus Liebig University Giessen in 2013. The theme of the meeting was *'Extended Education and Social Inequality.'* The 3<sup>rd</sup> NEO ER conference was hosted by Sungkyunkwan University, Seoul in 2014. The topic of the Seoul meeting was *'Values and Prospects of Extended Education.'* Experts from eight countries presented their works in the meeting. A comprehensive review and summary of the proceedings was published in the IJREE (Bae, 2014). The recent 4<sup>th</sup> conference was cohosted by NEO ER, Sungkyunkwan University, and the Korean After-school Study Association (KASA) in Seoul. The topic was *'Expanding the Horizon of Research in Extended Education: Perspective, Fields, and Methods.'* Presenters came from six countries – Germany, Switzerland, Japan, the US, Australia, and Korea.

The 4<sup>th</sup> NEO ER Conference at Sungkyunkwan University Seoul



<sup>1</sup> Please find more information about the IJREE on <http://IJREE.budrich-journals.de>

## Expanding the Horizon of Research in Extended Education

### *Safety as a Foundation for the Quality Programs but the Area Lacking in Research*

Among the conference participants there was agreement that given the importance of safety as a foundational factor for achieving the quality of extended education programs, little attention has been paid to and few studies have been conducted on this issue. What was shared among participants was that children's safety is an essential prerequisite to all other developmental outcomes like psychological and safety/security needs in Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

In this context, the work done by Maschke, Kielblock, & Stecher (2016), '*Perspectives on extracurricular activities which have gone unnoticed so far: Physical and psychological safety*', gained keen interests among the conference participants. To suggest the critical role of safety and security of children in achieving educational outcomes, the authors at first presented the conceptual model of the quality of extracurricular activities that includes main features of effective programs. This model was created by integration of two models – the Model of Program Effectiveness by Miller (2003) and Key Indicators of Quality in Afterschool Programs by Huang et al. (2008). In this model, they suggested two features of safety – physical safety and psychological safety. The authors, however, pay more attention to physical safety – particularly, sexual violence in the context of extended education. Based on the socio-structural approach they argued that while it is evident that extended education programs provide a variety of educational benefits to participants as well as the society as a whole, the program also should provide safe environment in order to achieve the outcomes and benefits. Particularly, more attention should be paid to peer-to-peer sexual violence at "*uncontrollable spaces*" where peer groups develop their own values and culture in their own world. Concerning the reason few studies have been done in Germany from this perspective, the authors explained that researchers usually have a tendency to look into the positive side of extended education. Pointing out this trend, the authors insisted that due attention should be given to negative experiences and outcomes such as sexual violence and stress. All in all, the central contribution of this paper is to broadening the perspective in the field of extended education.

### *Goals and Principles as the Determinants of the Quality in Extended Education Offerings*

Pointing out the lack of research on the quality of extended education in Swiss, Schüpbach (2016) attempted to investigate the effects of goals and principles in the school guidelines on the quality of extended education offerings. Considering that most research have taken into account individual and family contexts, dosage, program environments, and instruction factors as determinants of outcomes, a close look at the impact of goals and principles in the implementation guideline on the

quality of the programs is of great value. It is also notable for this study to employ mixed methods approach including qualitative content analysis and quantitative analysis of data that measure the quality of extracurricular activities. According to this study, directors of extended education in Swiss consider opening up the schools to the community and promoting manual and practical skills of students to be most important goals, while psychological development and student learning is considered less important. As Schüpbach indicated, it is surprising that one-third of all-day schools sampled in this study have no mentions about educational principles and goals. However, the findings above should be interpreted in the context of the Swiss education systems and cultural backgrounds. As suggested during the conference, it may be of interest to conduct cross-national comparative research on this topic. Finally, it is noteworthy that Schüpbach's study employed 'multi-perspective approach' that made a comparison of perspectives on the quality of extended education offerings between outside observers and those who are directly responsible for the programs. To conclude, this study contributes to the development of research in extended education by providing new perspective focusing on goals and principles as predictors of the quality programs and suggesting the effectiveness of multi-perspective approach for better understanding of extended education.

### *Quality Benchmark Rating System Employing the Model of the Indicator System*

The quality in education is the goal that most education professionals pursue. The same holds true for extended education. With the growing importance of educational opportunities out of school time, improving the quality of extended education programs became a key issue in many countries. However, while significance of quality assurance is one thing, measuring the quality of the programs is another. Without evaluating or measuring the quality, one cannot obtain information on what are problems and how to enhance the quality of the programs. With the comprehensive and in-depth reviews of the related literature, Huang (2016) proposed the *Theoretical Model of the Indicator System* that can be utilized in evaluating the quality or effectiveness of afterschool programs. The model consists of three major components – program organization, program environment, and instructional features. Each area has specific indicators to be used in the actual measurement of the quality of afterschool programs. Huang also suggested the *Quality Benchmark Rating System* that consists of the brief definition of benchmarks, indicators with the form of questions, and appropriate weight or point assigned to each indicator. With the effective use of the rating system, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners may gain valuable information on strengths and weaknesses for program improvement. Meanwhile, it should be pointed out that the quality benchmark rating system was initially developed based on the context of US afterschool programs. Therefore, extended education researchers, when they attempt to apply the standardized quality indicators, should pay particular caution taking into account particular contexts in which the programs are implemented. Huang's quality evaluation model would contribute to

program improvement in practices and help to conduct more elaborate and scientific research in the field of extended education.

### *Teachers: Extension of the scope and topic in extended education research*

Kanefuji (2016) examined whether or not the existence of a *School Support Community Office* (SSCO) affects teachers' perception on their work conditions in Japanese elementary schools. She also investigated the impact of teachers' positive perception about cooperation with parents and the local community on their perception on working conditions. It is well known that teachers in Asian countries like Japan and Korea traditionally carry heavy workload at schools. In many cases they are expected to manage not only regular classes but also extracurricular activities after school hours. In this context, reducing school teachers' burden has been one of the top priorities among education policies. As Kanefuji pointed out, while there have been many studies on children and youth, little research has been conducted on teachers and care givers in the context of extended education. According to her work, teachers who work in schools having SSCO tend to feel fewer burdens on after-school hour works. Teachers who felt greater support from parents and the community are more likely to have positive notions on the cooperation among stakeholders. Finally, teachers with more positive perception on cooperation were found to have positive feeling on their working condition. The academic contribution of this study is to extend the scope of extended education research to teachers who have been less studied.

### *Out of class activities of college students: Emerging field of extended education research*

Worldwide, higher education is becoming more and more universalized. In the case of Korea, more than 70% of high school graduates go to college. In line with this trend, research on students' experiences in college is gaining greater popularity among researchers. Particularly, there is a growing body of literature on the impact of academic and social experiences in college on student outcomes. It is obvious that out of class activities is important part of college experiences. Nevertheless, fewer studies have been conducted on this area in comparison with other aspects of student experiences in college.

Bae et al. (2016) intended to examine out of class experiences of college students and investigated the effects of these activities on selected educational outcomes in Korea. The conceptual framework of the study was built on the basis of the *Comprehensive Model of Influences on Student Learning and Persistence* developed by Terenzini & Reason (2005). This study involved the secondary data analysis. The data were collected from *Korean-National Survey of Student Engagement* (K-NSSE), the nationwide survey of student experiences. In their research, college students' out of class activities were measured by six categories including interaction with the faculty, preparing for class, working for pay on/off campus, co-curricular activities, community services, and relaxing and socializing. Most activities except one were found to be positively related to student outcomes – critical thinking, higher or-

der learning, learning social values and ethics, and collaborative learning. However, working for pay on/off campus out of the class time was not associated with the educational outcomes above. Furthermore, the study found that more working hours on/off campus led to less collaborative learning experiences of students. Given students' socio-economic state (SES) affecting the extent of working hours on/off campus, the findings imply that out of class activities of college students may influence inequality in higher education. This study is of great value, showing a new field of research in extended education.

### *Action Research Bridging Practices and Research in Extended Education*

Cartmel (2016) in her work suggests benefits and advantages that action research projects may provide to researchers and practitioners in extended education. According to the literature (Peter, 2012; West, 2011), action research would help gain deeper and better understanding on real world problems and may contribute to building up the evidence-based knowledge. Likewise, action research as a "*reflective process of progressive problem solving*" helps promote the quality of professional development by allowing educators to acquire theoretical backgrounds and disseminate research findings within the community. Cartmel also argues that action research can be better performed through collaborative team projects and pave the way for knowledge sharing and subsequent changes in practice. Her research surveyed ten educators who have been involved in action research projects in Australia. It was found that action research, keeping educators motivated in their roles, helped to decrease staff turnover. In addition, the study found that those who participated in action research were able to build research competency, strengthen knowledge base, and finally improve practices. Given the importance of professional development in the field of extended education, this study shows the advantage of action research that can "*weave practice into theory and theory into practice*" and adds value to improving the professionalisation in extended education. An elaborated and peer-reviewed version of this presentation, including further analyses and interpretations, is published in this 2/16 issue of the IJREE.

## Conclusion

Research in extended education is still in progress. There exist many issues that have received little attention among researchers. There are also many fields in extended education that have been less investigated. It would be effective for extended education researchers to employ theories, perspectives, and methods that have been well developed in the traditional fields of education research. However, it is also important for researchers to find perspectives and develop research methods that are suited for the context of extended education research. An attempt was shown at the NEO ER Seoul conference in 2016. All works presented and suggestions made at the conference would greatly contribute to strengthening the capacity of the extended



education research community. Furthermore, the papers presented at the Seoul conference will be published in the 1/17 issue of the *International Journal for Research on Extended Education* (IJREE).

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