Introduction: Extended Education from an International Comparative Point of View

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Last year, the International Research Network (IRN) EXTENDED EDUCATION of the World Education Research Association (WERA) was established (reported in IJREE 1/2017; see Schüpbach & Stecher, 2017): In April 2017, the Network for Research on Out-of-School Time and Extracurricular Educational Research (NEO-ER) – an international network with a group of international experts launched in 2010 – became the WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION. The organizers of the WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION are Marianne Schuepbach, University of Bamberg, and Ludwig Stecher, University of Giessen. The goal of WERA's networks is to advance education research worldwide on specific scholarly topics. The WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION is a collaborative group of scholars conducting research on extended education, or out-of-school time and extracurricular learning in childhood and in adolescence, which is on the rise in learning societies today. In almost every modern country in Europe, North and South America, Asia, and Australia, there have been numerous efforts in the last 10 to 20 years to expand these institutional education and care opportunities to supplement schooling.

The first WERA-IRN EXTENDED EDUCATION Conference, Extended Education from an International Comparative Point of View, took place from November 30 to December 2, 2017 at the University of Bamberg. In this issue's DEVELOPMENTS in the Field of Extended Education, you find a report on the conference. Three enriching and interesting co-keynote speeches at the conference compared the developments in the field of extended education in two countries. These three contributions are published in this issue in a special section.

Educational comparative research in the field of extended education, or out-of-school time and extracurricular education, is in its infancy. Educational comparative research in general has gained in importance over the last decades. According to Watson (1996, p. 387):

> Comparative education research has led to a substantial increase in our understanding of, and awareness of, educational systems and processes in different parts of the world; of the infinite variety of aims, purposes, philosophies and structures; and the growing similarities of the issues facing educational policy-makers across the world.

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In the new research field of extended education, discussions and developments have taken place mainly in individual countries, in federalist countries, and even in regions. This has affected the research conducted up to now. For research endeavors in this field, the conference contributions published in this issue represent an important start.

In the first contribution, "Comparison of Extended Education and Research in this Field in Taiwan and Switzerland," Marianne Schuepbach and Denise Huang compare a country with an Asian culture and society with a country with a Western culture and society. First, they provide an overview on the situation in Switzerland and describe the traditional school scheduling, the starting position and expectations of extended education, the current structure of the offerings, and an overview of research in the field of extended education. They then present the same overview for the system in Taiwan. The cultural differences in general are then juxtaposed considering the individualist perspective on education in the West and the collectivist perspective on education in the East. Schuepbach and Huang then examine the two countries in view of Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions representing differences between national cultures. They go on to discuss the cultural impact in the field of extended education in these two countries and the existing differences. In the last part of the contribution, Schuepbach and Huang present challenges in comparative research and in possible future research from an international comparative point of view. They note that it is particularly important to conduct international comparative research together with researchers and participating countries with different cultural backgrounds, such as Europe, the United States, and Asia. They conclude: "There is a lot that we can and should learn from each other. But as we are trying to improve student learning with the evidences we gathered in a different country, we should also be aware that in order to make a 'best practice' work, it requires translation to a different culture/value system" (p. 8).

The second contribution, "A Comparison of the Afterschool Programs of Korea and Japan: From the Institutional and Ecological Perspectives," by Sang Hoon Bae and Fujuko Kanefuji, compares the afterschool programs in the two neighboring Asian countries especially from an institutional and an ecological perspective. In contrast to the first contribution, there are no general cultural differences here, as both cultures are shaped by Eastern values and ethics. For each country, Bae and Kanefuji present definitions and features of afterschool programs, the current status, and policy emphasis and issues. They then examine the communalities and differences. They find that in addition to the similar Eastern values and ethics, there is a long tradition of interaction between the two countries in various fields, which has resulted in the commonalities. These include afterschool programs as a means to combat social problems, the active role of the government in the implementation of afterschool programs, and the strong belief that school buildings are safe places for afterschool programs. The authors find differences in the officially announced goals and the means of promoting cooperation between schools and communities, which they see as coming from different social, cultural, and political backgrounds of Japan and Korea. Bae and Kanefuji attempt to uncover commonalities and differences in the afterschool programs in Japan and Korea with the aid of institutional and ecological perspectives and see this approach as a possible way to examine extended education worldwide, "which is increasingly developing into a global culture of education" (p. 27).

The third contribution, "Swedish School-Age Educare Centres and German All-Day Schools – A Bi-National Comparison of Two Prototypes of Extended Education," by Anna Klerfeld and Ludwig Stecher, compares two prototypes of extended education found in two European countries with Western values – Sweden and Germany. Klerfeld and Stecher start out by noting that in both countries there is already a long tradition of extended education, and they view the school-age Educare facilities in Sweden and the all-day schools in Germany as prototypes of extended education. They outline the historical development and selected constituting aspects of the programs, such as the aims at the student level, the professionalism of the staff, and the extracurricular activities. They point out that in most cases, the programs in both countries aim at aspects that are not very different. There are some differences regarding society's expectations, however. The authors then give a short overview of research findings on German all-day schools and Swedish school-age Educare centers. They find that in the past, research studies in the two countries focused on different areas and that in Germany, research is available mainly only since the 2000s. Klerfeld and Stecher report that despite the research available, in both countries there is a lack of empirical data and answers. They view the research field as a multilevel system and call for research on the level of the child, the family level, the school level, and the national/international level. They round off their contribution with conclusions that bring together the most important aspects.

References

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