

# Extended Education and Social Inequality: An Introduction

In the last ten years or so, a lot of studies and papers dealing with questions of extended education have been published, a lot of them in the *International Journal for Research on Extended Education*. These publications mostly focus on: questions of the effectiveness of learning opportunities outside regular classes (outcome perspective); questions regarding who are using these opportunities (participating perspective); or who is working in the field of extended education and what training they've had (professionalism perspective). Furthermore, most of these papers focus on the individual's perspective – the perspective of the participants – or an institutional perspective, where emphasis is on the question of how to design these kind of activities and programmes effectively.

However, for a full understanding of the meaning of the whole field of extended education in modern societies, we have to dig deeper and change the point of view to the *social or societal function* of extended education (Stecher, Maschke, & Preis, 2018). Among other things (i.e. questions of extended education as part of the labour market) this means to examine which role extended education plays with regard to the social stratification of a society, or to put it in a more specific way, how extended education and social inequality are linked with each other.

On the one hand, as Stecher, Maschke, and Preis (2018) pointed out, 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 the institutional learning and care opportunities to supplement (traditional) schooling. Seen from this point of view, extended education provisions and programmes are focused on fostering improvement in low performing students and students with a low socioeconomic and/or a low educational family background. In this sense, extended education provisions are part of the fight against social and educational inequality. This holds true at least for state run programmes.

On the other hand, we can look at the field of extended education from the students' and their families' point of view, respectively. From this perspective, extended education offers can be seen as part of the families' socioeconomic reproduction strategies. Extended education provisions are used by the families as an additional way of supporting their children in accruing cultural capital. With the increase in importance of education and further training for modern societies and thus as part of social (re)production conditions in general, parental reproduction strategies are facing adjustment pressures in particular with a view to

the accumulation of cultural capital in order to (continue to) secure successful status advantages for the children. As a result, according to Zinnecker (1994, p. 88, own translation), “more and more social groupings [...] are attempting to realise the societal transmission of social positions by having their children complete programmes to acquire cultural and educational resources in competition with other children and young people”. From this point of view, participating in extended education activities will widen the social gap. This holds in particular for private offers and activities. In some countries, this point of view is linked to the term ‘shadow education’ (Bray, 2007) and the discussion about the need of regulating this private market of supplementary education (Bray & Kwo, 2014).

Taking into account both perspectives it is still open to debate if extended education programmes and activities narrow or widen the social gap between social groups. This special issue of the IJREE will try to give an answer to this question based on three international examples.

*Entrich and Lauterbach* show that there is an increasing market in Germany with regard to private tutoring within the last about ten to twenty years. Focusing on private tutoring (‘Nachhilfe’) they try to give an answer on two general questions, both of them closely related to the topic of social inequality. Firstly, they try to give an answer to the question as to why the demand for shadow education in Germany has increased as much as it has, and, secondly, what the implications of the increased investments in shadow education on social inequality are. Based on a German longitudinal study (Life-study 1979-2012) they try to give empirical answers to a number of hypothesis derived from these two general questions. Among other things, the findings show that the motives for using private tutoring differ between Germany and, for example, Asian countries. That gives rise to the assumption that the structure and the function of ‘shadow education’ is different in different countries.

*Bae, Eunwon, and Byun* investigate in their article the ways in which student patterns of extended education participation are affected by the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of the families. Based on a huge representative data set they identified five different types of participating in after school programmes, where all of them are inter-linked with social characteristics of the students. Their analysis shows that students with highly educated parents (and a high socioeconomic status) in particular use activities and programmes offered by private institutions outside school – that means that these students in particular use shadow education offers. The authors interpret this finding as a hint that (at least some areas of) extended education fosters social stratification.

The third article comes from Russia. Whilst the aforementioned articles are based on specific data sets, *Kosaretzky and Ivanov* try to give an overview of studies conducted in Russia within the last about twenty years about the question of which students – based on different socioeconomic aspects – have access to extra-curricular activities. Aside from the fact that this article is probably the first comprehensive overview of the field of extended education and the question of social inequality in Russia, the findings indicate that, apart from socioeconomic aspects, with regard to access to extended education programs and activities regional aspects have to be taken into account. A finding that Bae et al. also put emphasis on.

Even if some research questions about extended education and its link to social stratification and social inequality still seem to be open, the three contributions collected in this

special issue bring the research in this area an important step forward. We will continue publishing on this topic in forthcoming issues of the IJREE.

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## References

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