

# Inequality in Extracurricular Education in Russia

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**Abstract:** The article considers the structure of the inequality of access to extra-curricular education in Russia and factors influencing it. Among the main barriers are the territorial context, urban and rural education, the families' socioeconomic status and cultural capital. It is also showed that the factors of the inequality are also produced with strong spatial (interregional, inter-municipal) differentiation; the sector's peculiarities of regulation and policy. Despite active measures of the state policy in increasing participation coverage of in extracurricular education and activities, the questions of social differentiation's risks remain not solved. Tools for identifying risk categories have not been developed.

**Keywords:** extracurricular education in Russia, extracurricular activities, inequality in extracurricular education

## Introduction

In Russia, in recent years, the growing inequality of educational opportunities is increasingly felt. This problem is not only a question of morality and justice, but also largely a question of the country's economic well-being. Ensuring equal access to education for all children, regardless of the social, economic and cultural level of their families, is one of the key challenges of modern education.

Since the second half of the 20th century, researchers have focused on the causes of significant achievement gaps between different groups of students within the same school, which are due to differences in the social background of students (Coleman et al., 1966).

Extracurricular activities (ECA) for children is usually considered in the context of inequality. Children for low-income families are more likely participate in school-based extracurricular activities. Their peers from middle-income families are more involved in the system outside of school, their choice is not due to a territorial factor (Bennett, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012). Along with the family's financial situation and the community's social context, there is another focus on the parents' level of education (Ashbourne & Andres, 2015). The higher it is, the child involvement is higher (while the level of education of the mother is more significant from the point of view of child development) (Bartko & Eccles,

2003; Fredricks & Eccles, 2006; Lareau & Weininger, 2008; Randall & Bohnert, 2009). The ECA potential in overcoming social inequality is considered in the context of its effects on academic performance, school involvement, and school dropout (Eccles, Templeton, 2002), schoolchildren socialization (Eccles & Roeser, 2011), development of social skills (Larson, Hansen, & Walker, 2005; Mahoney & Stattin, 2000; Bohnert, Fredricks, & Randall, 2010; Gilman, Meyers, & Perez, 2004; Hansen, Larson, & Dworkin, 2003).

The transformation of the sector of extracurricular education (ECE), its relation to socio-economic characteristics of inequality are poorly studied and understood. Meanwhile, these studies have a bilateral value and importance because they allow us to see the important part of inequality and through this focus to better understand the transition processes in post-Soviet countries in the context of children's education and development (Chankseliani, 2017).

In this article, for the first time, we aim to give a comprehensive picture of Russian studies of inequality in the extracurricular education sector, covering the entire structure of providers and directions. We also attempt to systematize data at the national level in order to present the current state of inequality and to generalize conclusions and hypotheses about the conditions and factors of inequality in the extracurricular education sector.

We should mention that "extracurricular" means the topics that are out of school curricular and are not obligatory according to the state educational standards. So extracurricular activities include different content that cannot be taught during the school hours. When we speak about inequality, we mean the inequality of access to services and the coverage (type of the activities: school based and out-of-school; content of the activities and programs: sports, arts, music and etc.) the target groups' involvement. In this article, we will look at the features of inequality at the inter-regional level, within regions depending on the settlement's type, between groups of children depending on the family background - level of education, income, cultural capital.

The article's topic is rather new for Soviet and post-Soviet research agenda. Russian studies of differences in ECE involvement and mechanisms of inequality reproduction are quite new and not numerous areas. The main corpus of Soviet and post-Soviet studies covers the extracurricular education potential for development and socialization, the organization of some ECE forms and methods using pedagogical research methods (Golovanov, 2001; Rozhkov, 2007). Focus to the problem of differences in access arises only in the second decade of the 21st century, it is also conditioned with the use of sociological research methods.

The very appearance of publications testifies to the actualization of the problem both in scientific and practical terms. It is important to mention the growth of research interest confirmed by the body of researches and publications analyzed in this article.

## ECA in Russia: Snapshot

One hundred years ago, the formation of extracurricular education for children (out-of-school education) as part of the state education system in the Soviet Union can be considered as one of the most interesting and (fortunately) successful social experiments of the

Soviet government (Kupriyanov, 2016). After a period of crisis in the 90s, in the Russian state educational policy, the development of extracurricular education has again become a zone of special attention and large-scale experiments.

Russian legislation does not guarantee free extracurricular education.

Children can participate in different types of activities. The total number of children aged 5 to 18 years decreased until 2012, and then began to grow (Federal statistical observation – FSO)<sup>1</sup>. It is 77.7% as of 2018 (FSO).

There are free of charge and payment activities provided both by public and private organizations. According to the data of the Federal statistical observation, 17.5% of ECA services provided to Russian citizens in 2017 are paid. Independent monitoring of All-Russian People Front shows that only 43% of children participate in ECA programs completely free of charge, 28% of children are involved in fully paid ECA programs (Kosaretsky et al., 2019).

There are two major segments in the ECA system: school-based and extracurricular organizations. Even though today ECA programs can be implemented by all types of educational organizations (public and private) that have received licenses The modern system of the ECA organizations is the successor of the system of out-of-school education existing in the USSR.

According to official statistics, in 2018 there were 12,841 out-of-school organizations for extracurricular education of children in Russia. Most of the organizations (more than 80%) are in municipal ownership (the founders are local governments), smaller, but more prosperous in terms of infrastructure and funding-managed from the regional level. Organizations belong to the departments of education (centers of children extracurricular education, development of creativity of children and youth, stations of young technicians, clubs, etc.), culture and sports (art schools, children's sports schools). Along with state organizations, there are also private ones. In schools, the ECA staff includes mostly school teachers; special ECA organizations it's the specialist and tutors of ECA programs (in Russian tradition – ECA teachers). According to official statistics, their share is small, and coverage is insignificant (FSO). However, according to the Higher School of Economics Monitoring of education, coverage is 13% on average and 17 in major cities (Kosaretsky et al., 2019).

Increasing the coverage of children between the ages of 5 and 18 in further education programmes is an important public policy objective. The main challenge for the implementation of the state strategy is not only to create opportunities for children, but also for them and their families to start using these opportunities. The paradox is that there are no state guarantees of free ECA participation, but there is a strategic goal of increasing ECA accessibility.

## Methodology

To study the inequality, we mainly use a framework based on the concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1977). Its uneven distribution leads to social and educational inequality of those

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1 The data of the Federal statistical observation is available on the website: <https://www.gks.ru/>.

who have “capital” of different levels. In this analysis, we also tend to rely on the mainstream methodology of studying differentiation and inequality in the extracurricular activities sector (Bennett, Lutz, & Jayaram, 2012; Furstenberg, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003, 2008; Lareau, Weininger, & Conley, 2015), the important focus is considering the Russian case in the international context.

The topic of inequality becomes relevant in the context of post-Soviet transit, which exacerbated the problem of social stratification in a period of institutional turbulence (Gordon, Juceviciene, & Kodelja, 2004; Silova, 2010) and other studies of the ECA post-Soviet system (Bjornavold, 2000; Povolyaeva, Popova, & Dubovik, 2015; Kosaretsky, Grunicheva, & Goshin, 2016).

In the Russian tradition, the statement is used that all children had the opportunity to participate in ECA. Meanwhile, it cannot be verified, because there is no reliable statistics that only include data for the entire USSR situation, where it is impossible to allocate data for Soviet Russia (RSFSR). It is important to note that no such research has been conducted ever. Analogies can be found in studies of school education.

Our analysis is based on a significant corpus of data (federal statistics on extracurricular education organizations and children participating in extracurricular activities), original data from the Higher School of Economics Monitoring of education markets and organizations (2013-2017). There is also data provided by Levada Center with a representative region sample including surveys of parents, teachers, heads of organizations. It’s important to mention that empirical data according to the federal statistics include the information from the organizations providing ECA programs (number of participants, their age, territorial diversification, teachers and content). For data analysis methods of descriptive statistics and classical methods of comparison of averages are used.

The findings are also based on the studies of specialized segments of extracurricular education (e.g. technological education) that have been produced by Institute of Education (Higher School of Economics).

The selected articles and publications have been included in this review and analysis due to the high level and uniqueness of the empirical base of research at the regional and national level, the use of a wide sample of participants, as well as the possibility of using statistics methods of comparison using the data on the families’ socio-economic status.

Some studies discuss differences in the duration of participation in programs (Sobkin & Kalashnikova, 2013) and their content (directions) (Roshchina, 2012, 2015). Differences in the coverage of children with ECA programs depending on the families’ educational status (Sobkin & Kalashnikova, 2013), restrictions on access to ECE in rural areas (Ivanyushina & Alexandrov, 2014), transport barriers and security barriers (Vakhstein & Stepantsov, 2012) are revealed. Inequality in access to ECA services in schools with different status (elite and ordinary, etc.) was also studied (Roshchina, 2012, 2015), as well as differentiation of opportunities for the use of supplementary training in school subjects (Prakhov, 2014; Burdiak, 2015).

However, there is an understanding of the limitations of data and research on all aspects. In this regard, the article is an attempt to outline significant perspectives of attention from the point of view of inequality both in terms of manifestations and factors.

## Findings

### Territorial Context: Interregional and Intra-Regional Inequality

The ECA coverage rates vary significantly between the regions of the Russian Federation. The gap between the first and the last ten regions is increased to three-time. This reflects the basic high level of interregional differentiation in the main economic indicators (World Bank, 2018). There are noticeable differences in the financing of general education, the size of schools, the proportion of students in the second shift, etc. in Russian regions. But due to the mandatory scale of participation, there are no noticeable differences in general education. However, for ECA, the differences in coverage between regions are significant. Within regions, differences participation in extracurricular activities are evident, depending on the level of urbanization and the size of the settlement. In rural areas, children receive education mainly in schools.

In the outside of school ECE, children from rural areas participate on a smaller scale, compared to residents of urban areas. In addition, the ECA programs are of lower quality in context of professional staff and teachers' support. A third of parents of children living in rural areas surveyed by the Monitoring of education markets and organizations noted that their children do not engage in ECE outside of school, while the national average was 23.8%. In cities with different populations (except for Moscow), the proportion of uninvolved в ECA children is 18-20%. Most parents (more than 60%) living in villages noted that their children never attended music, art and sports schools (Kosaretsky, Kupriyanov, & Filippova, 2016). This is because the network of specialized organizations is poorly developed in rural areas and children often have to settle for offers of school-based ECA services (Higher School of Economics Monitoring of education, 2017).

There are several reasons for this: low availability of specialized organizations focused on a deeper and including the pre-professional level of programs; less developed cultural environment; limited transport mobility; the position of the part of the parent community (Alexandrov, Tenisheva, & Savelyeva, 2017). It should also be noted that in rural areas the criterion of "proximity to home" is evaluated differently than in the city, where it is usually understood as a road that takes less than half an hour (regardless of whether on foot or by public transport). In rural areas, more than half a kilometer is often perceived as critical in terms of accessibility (Alexandrov, Tenisheva, & Savelyeva, 2017).

A certain compensation for children from villages is participation in creative activities, as well as sports based on rural clubs, which are not officially related to the ECE system. According to ECA content in rural areas students are more involved in such areas as sports, military-patriotic, tourist and local lore, and at the same time are less likely to engage in foreign languages, research activities, sports in specialized organizations (Higher School of Economics Monitoring of education, 2017).

The villagers who took part in the survey said that their child did not participate in ECA at preschool age. In medium and small towns, fewer students are involved in ECA (except sports) than in the metropolis.

In large cities, in addition to a more extensive network of public organizations, a variety of private sector ECA programs are widely represented. As the size of the settlement decreases, the supply of the private sector decreases in volume and spectrum. In small towns

and rural areas, it is virtually non-existent. This is directly related to the population's solvency (Kosaretsky et al., 2019).

### Families' Background: Education, Social Capital and Incomes

Involvement in ECA programs is influenced by the family's place of residence, as well as the families background, firstly education and then welfare. They are implemented on the involvement's scale, preference of schools based ECA activities to out-of-school organizations, intensity and duration of participation, and availability of private sector services.

In families with a high level of education of the mother, children on average spend their time outside less and watch TV, but more attend clubs outside school, are engaged with a tutor and spend more time on self-education. In families where the level of education is average and lower, children have more free time for walking, watching TV, school circles (Kosaretsky, Kupriyanov, & Filippova, 2016).<sup>2</sup>

In the most educated families, children are more likely to be involved in ECA at pre-school age and the intensity of these activities is higher (Roshchina, 2012).

Children from families of more educated parents have longer trajectories of participation in programs (Sobkin and Kalashnikova, 2014).

The intensity of activities is again significantly higher in the group of more affluent respondents: there is a greater proportion of those who indicated that their child attended two, three or more three ECA types.

Differences are shown in the programs' content. Structured activities with an academic bias-foreign language, school subjects, as well as art are more often attended by children from families with high socioeconomic status, their mothers mostly have higher education; they have many books at home. The relationship of unstructured activity with the status of the family is noticeably weaker and is manifested mainly in classes in subjects: outside the clubs and sections, these or other subjects are additionally studied almost only by children whose mothers have higher education (Alexandrov, Tenisheva, & Savelyeva, 2017).

To analyze the data of the survey of parents of schoolchildren in the framework of the 2016 Monitoring of education markets and organizations, the following approach was used in the aspect of interest to us. There are two groups of respondents: 1) "poor without higher education" – the mother without higher education, a family with a low income; 2) "wealthy with higher education" – the mother has higher education, with an income above average. The first group included 1339 respondents; the second group included 923 respondents out of 3883 possible. The proportion of children from families with low level of education and income not involved in ECE was 2 times higher (44%) than in families with higher education (mother) and income above average (21%). The scale of the gap between groups of families is growing: if in 2013 the difference between groups was 8.5 percentage points, in 2016 it increased to 22 percentage points. In the group "poor without higher education" more of those who attend circles only in school (18%), and less covered by ECE. In part, this can be explained by the higher share of paid ECA services, as well as limited opportunities to accompany children to ECA organizations in this category of families. Children of

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2 'Circle' or in soviet and Russian tradition is a small structured and non-formal educational association of children organizing and leading by the teacher or tutor.

well-off parents with higher education, in turn, are more involved in classes outside of school and less likely to participate school based ECA.

In affluent families with higher education, children are more likely to engage in ECE at preschool age. This means that their starting opportunities, including for ECE, increase compared to other peers. The greatest difference in the proportion of children not involved in ECE is expressed in primary and secondary schools: the proportion of such children differs by more than two times. In high school, more than half of the children from the conditional group “poor without higher education” do not participate in ECE.

The gap between family groups in income and education is also observed in the scale of involvement, i.e. the number of circles (sections) attended by the child. It is most significant among those children who attend three or more circles. In affluent families, where parents have higher education, such 30%, among low-income families, where parents without higher education-only 13%. Differences between these groups of families are also evident in the content of ECA programs. Within the school, children of well-off parents with higher education pay much more attention to the study of foreign languages, art, school subjects and less to sports sections, while children from poor families, where parents do not have higher education, are more likely to engage in sports, tourism and local history. An interesting feature is manifested in the field of sports: children of wealthy parents with higher education are more likely to participate in sports outside school and less often in school than children of the second group of parents. Playing sports outside school – is primarily a sports school where programs are being implemented at a higher level. As a rule, classes in them are accompanied by quite high costs associated with the acquisition of uniforms and equipment, trips to competitions and training on specially equipped sports grounds.

Children from well-educated and affluent families are more involved in NGO-based activities. Among wealthy and educated parents, 18% can afford to take the child to commercial organizations, and among low-income without higher education-only 8%. The most pronounced stratification of society on the ECA availability outside of school in rural areas and small towns: 41% of children of low-income parents without higher education there is nowhere else engaged in ECA outside school (compared with 14% of children of wealthy parents with higher education).

The characteristics of families' ECA strategies are largely determined by the characteristics of cultural capital and well-being (to a lesser extent). For families with a low level of cultural capital and financial well-being, the fact that the child is under supervision, the organization of his leisure time is significant. They choose options for further education, focusing primarily on the proximity of the circle to the house (at school or in a government organization located nearby).

Wealthy parents with a high level of education are interested in the development of children, taking care of the efficiency of their free time, looking for quality ECA services, starting from preschool age, often not limited to one type of occupation. They are ready to accompany the child to activities for long distances, more attentive to what happens to the child in the classroom.

From the analysis of baseline factors, researchers have begun to focus on the analysis of involvement and strategies of different groups of families, including choice strategies, use of information etc. It's shown that families with a certain cultural capital, as well as so-

cial and economic resources, have the freedom to choose. The poor have less knowledge and information channels and less information skills than the better-off. At the same time, the attitude of the family to ECE is more determined by cultural orientations and values than by the volume of social and material resources (Poplavskaya, Gruzdev, & Petlin, 2018).

Despite the efforts of the state and the sector's active development, barriers and gaps in ECA accessibility and coverage remain due to various factors. The level of availability of extracurricular education in Russia as a whole, including on a budgetary basis, is quite high. At the same time, there are differences in the involvement of different children groups related to both external barriers of accessibility (lack of infrastructure in some regions, transport barriers), objective (education and income) and subjective characteristics of these groups (motivation and cultural capital of families).

The main reason for interregional and intermunicipal differences in the coverage of children with ECE is the lack of places on high-quality modern programs associated with the scale and structure of the network of organizations of ECA education and insufficient funding. Many children in rural areas have limited access to ECE including art, sports and modern programs in the field of science and technology.

Transport and material barriers to access are significant, but they are not the only factors determining differences in the scale and nature of participation in extracurricular education. Families' background, education and incomes, attitudes and strategies, their involvement in children's education and development, understanding of the ECE's effects, their skills for using the information – all these factors play an important role. It is manifested in differences in coverage and specific types of programs and services (different providers and quality). Children from low-income families with limited cultural capital are later included in ECA education, their trajectories are shorter, the range of programs is limited. The availability of extracurricular education varies depending on the areas of programs. Several sectors of extracurricular education are characterized by a high level of co-financing of families, for example, foreign language, ICT and coding.

In relation to family capital, the value of cultural capital is higher than material capital, manifested in the features of motivation, choice strategies and working with information.

Territorial differences in educational opportunities exacerbate inequality in family resources and reduce the chances of schoolchildren from poorly educated rural families. The specificity of inequality in extracurricular education is manifested – where these cultural capital's features have the best ground for demonstration in connection with the peculiarities of the institution and access regulation.

## Discussion

We strongly understand that we are presenting an overview rather than a full-fledged comprehensive study of the problem. It is the starting point for our ongoing program of research on individual aspects of inequality using more complex quantitative methods and expanding the qualitative ones.

We find connections with contextual factors similar to foreign studies (Hastings & Weinstein, 2008; Lareau, 2015). An interesting question is the scale of manifestations, the



power of influence and the presence of country features. However, it is very difficult to draw such conclusions because of the absence of comparative studies. Nevertheless, we can talk about the importance of this research area.

It seems particularly promising to consider inequality not only from the context side but also from the crosshairs of institutional factors. So, we see that inequality is not only related to contextual factors: territory, family background, family strategies and their manifestations. It is necessary to understand how the institutional structure and nature of ECA sector regulation, the participants' rights and guarantees, the financing of ECA system, the framework of choice, supporting of families in choosing affect the inequality.

In Russia, we are the first to focus on this. But now these are mostly hypotheses, they need new research on a strict methodological basis. There are no data in the international field of research, which also allows us to consider this focus as a selective field for comparing country cases of inequality through the analysis of institutional factors.

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