

Professionalizing the Extended Education Workforce

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For some time, the question of who is working in the field of extended education and what training these people have, i. e. the “professionalism perspective”, has been on the minds of researchers in extended education (cf. Bae & Stecher, 2019, p. 129).

In many contexts around the world, staff working in extended education settings often come from a variety of disciplines, which do not necessarily prepare for work within the field of extended education. In Germany, for instance, extended education staff (working in all-day schools) vary “from specialists with professional pedagogic training to employees with non-educational background” (Böhm-Kasper, Dizinger, & Gausling, 2016, p. 30). Activity leaders in afterschool programmes in the United States are characterised as young and relatively new to their jobs, often with limited formal training in the principles of (extended) education, who are on a temporary stopover on their way into other careers (Vandell & Lao, 2016). Cartmel and Brannelly (2016) describe the Australian extended education workforce in outside school hours (OSH) services as having the highest rate of under-qualification within the care and education sector with large numbers of staff who do not hold formal qualification and also are not expected to work toward any formal qualification. Often, fixed-term contracts and high turnover of staff working in the extended education offerings make it nearly impossible to implement further training programmes. Even in Sweden, where there are higher education institutions offering a three-year programme for leisure-time pedagogy, only one in five staff members holds such a certificate and two out of five have no relevant training for working with children (cf. Hjalmarsson & Odenbring, 2020).

At the same time, working in the field of extended education, engaging with children and youths of diverse backgrounds and being responsible for supporting their development and learning, is demanding and staff professionalism is an important condition for the provision of high-quality programmes (Larson et al., 2015; Vandell & Lao, 2016).

Based on the notion that professionalism in extended education involves complex sets of capabilities, skills, and attitudes Schüpbach and Lilla (2020) proposed five domains of professionalism for staff working in extended education: 1) reflectivity and discourse, 2) professional awareness, 3) collaboration and collegiality, 4) diversity management, and 5) personal mastery following the EPIK model by Paseka, Schratz, and Schritteser (2011), which was developed to reflect the broad components of educational professionalism originally expected of teachers.

Against this background and in view of an increasing shortage of skilled workers, which will also affect the education sector in general, and specifically the extended education sector

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in the future, there is a great need for the discourse on professionalism in extended education to be continued, ideas and programmes to be developed and implemented and measures to be taken.

In this regard, this Special Section on **Professionalizing the Extended Education Workforce** follows up on the Main Topic “Extended Education: Professionalization and Professionalism of Staff” in Volume 4 of *IJREE – International Journal for Research on Extended Education* published in 2016 (cf. Schüpbach, 2016) aiming at taking up and continuing the discourse presenting different perspectives on how to promote professional development in a rapidly growing sector.

The first contribution “The production and performance of workplace hierarchies in Australian Outside School Hours Care” by Bruce Hurst, Kylie Brannelly, and Jennifer Cartmel sharing about how they have examined the introduction of a set of professional standards for extended education workforce. In the second contribution “Qualified and Unqualified Staff in German All-day Schools. An Exploratory Overview” by Markus Sauerwein, Annalena Danner, Franziska Bock, Till-Sebastian Idel, and Gunther Graßhoff. the team makes some comparisons between what is known as lay pedagogues or unqualified staff and qualified teachers. The third contribution ““It shouldn’t be something you have to create on your own” Personal practical knowledge construction and professional learning for teachers in Swedish school-age educare” by Lena Glaés-Coutts discusses how the teachers construct their personal professional knowledge as teachers in extended education.

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