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## Cooling Out and Warming Up – Professional Strategies in the Education of Newly Arrived Migrant Students in Sweden

Anna-Maria S. Marekovic\*, Anna Liisa Närvänen\*\*

**Abstract:** This study explores how school professionals manage the challenges of educating newly arrived migrant students (NAMS), with a focus on the transition from the Language Introduction Program (LIP) to a national upper secondary school program or alternative forms of education. We draw on the theoretical framework of Inhabited Institutionalism to understand how school professionals' interpretations and sense-making of external policy pressures and internal challenges of teaching a diverse group of students are shaped by social interaction. The study reveals that professionals are critical of the educational system and its consequences for NAMS' education, due to its rigid admission requirements and unrealistic timeframes. To mitigate the potential effects on students' educational trajectories, the professionals employ both cooling-out and warming-up strategies. The study emphasizes the significance of social interaction among school professionals in interpreting the educational system and its consequences and suggests that the outcome of negotiations among professionals regarding different strategies is likely to have a significant impact on the future trajectories of NAMS.

**Keywords:** school professionals, newly arrived migrant student, inhabited institutionalism, educational trajectory, cooling out, warming up

### Introduction

The increasingly complex task of teachers, where they are required to balance quality and equity in education while encountering an increasingly diverse student body have been highlighted in research (Cuconato, du Bois-Reymond, & Lunabba, 2015; Svensson, 2019). This challenge is perhaps particularly pronounced when it comes to teaching newly arrived migrant students (NAMS) who comprise a heterogenous group in terms of educational background, language competencies, migration statuses etcetera (Pugh, Every & Hattam, 2012; Högberg, Gruber, & Nyström, 2020), and are at higher risk of facing multiple forms of disadvantage, including lower grade attainment and early school leaving compared to peers (Lundahl & Lindblad, 2018). The significance of introductory education for the social inclusion and educational attainment of NAMS is well documented in research (Sharif, 2017; Marekovic & Närvänen, 2022; Kaukko, Wilkinson & Kohli, 2022), underscoring the crucial

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role that teachers and other school professionals play in shaping their educational experiences and outcomes (Pugh, Every & Hattam, 2012; Bunar & Juvonen, 2022). However, it is essential to acknowledge the challenges that school professionals face in working with NAMS. They are often caught in a blind between policy and practice, that is reconciled by adopting strategies that often go beyond what is stipulated in the curriculum or their role as teachers (Kaukko & Wilkinson, 2018; Svensson, 2019; Högberg, Gruber, & Nyström, 2020).

Although the challenges related to NAMS are evident at all educational levels, certain transitional points and decision-making moments are crucial for their educational trajectories. One such transition is from compulsory to post-compulsory education or working life, during which structural inequalities may be exacerbated or overcome, as young people are sorted into different educational trajectories (Aaltonen & Karvonen, 2016; Emery, Spruyt, & Van Avermaet, 2021). For NAMS in Sweden aged 16-19, this transition occurs between the Language Introduction Program (LIP) and upper secondary school. The LIP aims to prepare NAMS for transition to a national upper secondary program or other types of education or training (Swedish National Agency for Education [SNAE], 2013). Particularly relevant to the LIP's goal is the negotiations and decision-making of school professionals in relation to grade assessment and progression, as the chances for transitioning to upper secondary school depend on it (Fejes et al., 2018).

While most research has focused on the experiences of NAMS (Sharif, 2017; Folke, 2018; Marekovic & Närvänen, 2022), recent studies have begun to explore how school professionals experience the challenges and dilemmas evident in introductory education (Svensson, 2019; Lee et al., 2021; Kaukko, Wilkinson & Kohli, 2022). A number of studies have emphasized the 'gatekeeping function' of teachers and other school professionals, who tend to prolong the time NAMS spend in introductory education. For example, Bunar and Juvonen's (2022) study shows how school leaders discursively construct NAMS as students with deficits, which must be remedied before they can transition to mainstream education. Consequently, students are being held back in the LIP, rather than allowing them to progress in their education. Furthermore, Emery, Spruyt, & Van Avermaet (2021; 2022) show how teachers' early assessment of NAMS' achievements and capabilities affects the sorting of students into different tracks. These processes tend to direct NAMS into vocational education rather than academic, lowering their expectations and ambitions which may lead to increased disadvantage and loss of potential of NAMS (see also Bonizzoni, Romito, & Cavallo, 2016).

However, research also exemplify the deeply unsatisfying position of school professionals working with NAMS. Commonly NAMS are perceived as ambitious and dedicated with high educational aspirations, oftentimes aiming for educational alternatives that allow for tertiary education (Feliciano & Lanuza, 2016; Morrice et al., 2020). Yet, the students often fail to achieve their ambitions due to strict regulations of the educational system (Högberg, Gruber, & Nyström, 2020; Emery, Spruyt, & Van Avermaet, 2022). Most research on educating NAMS has focused on the power of school professionals to influence the educational progression of the students through assessment and diagnosis, rather than through instilling motivation for their studies and learning.

The aim of this article is to explore how Swedish school professionals manage the complex challenges involved in educating NAMS between the ages of 16-19, with a particular focus on the transition from the LIP to a national upper secondary school program or other forms of education. As outlined, previous research has highlighted that school professionals are important actors in shaping the educational experiences and outcomes of NAMS and has

# Extended education and well-being of children: A case study of Iceland

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**Abstract:** This article explores the emergent trend of global educational policy which focuses on educational values such as well-being and holistic skills. It makes connections between the emergent trend of “education-as-flourishing” and current developments of extended education, using a specific case for illustration, i.e. school-age educare in Iceland. The author argues that there is an internal tension in the current educational global policy which emphasizes holistic skills and well-being in education but eventually produces a policy framework that overlooks the educational pathways of learners through extended education spaces. The case study shows that the manifold learning outcomes of extended education are largely overlooked in policy and practice. There are external and internal challenges at play that feed this tension, specifically a lack of agency of stakeholders and a supportive social structure. A new Act on Well-being of Children in Iceland encourages municipalities and professionals to align resources from diverse sectors, such as education, health, and social services. This study indicates a primary need for policy makers to work strategically with educators from all sectors to develop innovate educational practices within and outside of school to support the education and well-being of children and youth.

**Keywords:** Educational policy, well-being, extended education, school-aged educare

## Introduction

Significant changes are shaping education systems around the globe, as societies tackle social and economic uncertainty, post-pandemic impact, digital transformations and extreme weather events (OECD, 2022). As our ideas about education and learning are transformed, so are our ideas about where, how and with whom learning takes place. In this paper, I argue that the field of extended education plays an increasingly vital role in shaping spaces to support the education and well-being of children and young people. Thus, knowledge and research on extended education programs, its professional aims and practices, contribute to developing our education systems and should be considered integral to any educational policy and agenda. Educational policy can be a driver for educational innovation and curriculum change. However, its implementation relies on whether or not the changes become integrated in to the existing social structures and agency of professionals and stakeholders within a specific culture (Priestley, 2011; Priestley et al., 2020). This study explores the case of Icelandic school-age educare as an example of extended education practices and its links to policy, and the sometimes, contradictory rollout of educational policy, before and during a pandemic crisis.

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Extended education researchers focus on understanding the process of learning that takes place in diverse situations in the lives of children and youth. Although extended research as a specific academic field may be considered relatively “young” (Kerfelt & Pálsdóttir, 2014), it in many ways rests on educational theories and academic approaches that can be traced back to ancient greek philosophy and could be summed up as “education-in-the-wide-sense” (see similar perspectives in Kristjánsson, 2020; Noam & Triggs, 2020). Similarly, the global education-as-flourishing movement seeks to rebalance our current education policy “... in the service of a broader idea: to nurture, in every human being, a suite of distinctive human intelligences, which equip us not only to flourish as individuals but also to contribute to flourishing societies and economies, in balance with the planet.” (Stevenson, 2022, p.5). Such ideals inspire countries and communities to create sustainable education systems that nurture each and every child and promotes its education and well-being.

I will explore the links between modern concepts of extended education and the current call for a more holistic educational outlook that today shapes educational discourse, whether amongst practitioners, researchers, or government agencies. Any educational endeavour is situated within a specific context, and as other scholars have argued, extended education is always shaped by its societies culture, values, current challenges and policy issues (Stecher, 2020). Hence, this study sheds light on global educational policy from the standpoint of an extended education researcher and in the context of a specific country, i.e., Iceland where the educational government have made innovative efforts to create a holistic policy on the well-being of children that aligns resources from diverse sectors, such as education, health, and social services.

## Extended Education

Extended education may be delivered in the form of a program, continuous activities or various sporadic offerings; it may be school-based or run by a community or a private agent, and it may take place within school hours or out-of-school hours (Ljusberg & Klerfelt, 2022). Noam and Triggs define extended education as “... an experience that provides opportunities for children and youth to increase their motivation, passion, and engagement in understanding the world (Noam & Triggs, 2020, p. 295).<sup>1</sup> This definition builds on a community approach which is sometimes expressed in the African saying “it takes a village to raise a child”. It is an approach that opposes the dichotomy of formal and informal learning which often permeates academic and professional approaches to education and creates silos between sectors (Pálsdóttir, 2015).

It is possible to identify different drivers of extended education programs depending on the social context. Bae (2020) identifies four different developmental models of extended education: Extended education may be: 1) driven by school-reform and a need for educational innovation, 2) seen as a sector for youth development, 3) driven by social needs, such as child-care services and summer programmes for immigrant and minority students, and 4) seen as a vehicle for social reproduction and upward mobility through academic achievements which

1 In fact, they argue that any programme which aim is to repeat or reinforce school learning, should be termed extended *schooling*, not extended education.

# Professional Dilemmatic Spaces in Swedish School-Age Educare

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**Abstract:** Global interest in the field of extended education has increased over the past two decades. Extended education in the context of Swedish school-age educare has a unique position in the school system due to its voluntariness and governance as well as the free time and leisure activities it offers pupils and the lack of set learning outcomes. These features create dilemmas for teachers; thus, this study aims to generate knowledge about the complex and challenging dilemmas of school-age educare teachers in their professional work. The results are derived from a thematic analysis of two sets of data: oral and written reflections from 22 school-age educare teachers. The three themes of the teachers' dilemmas identified concern compulsory school vs. SAEC, offering pupils attractive teaching methods and content, and differing experiences and perspectives among the staff. The dilemmatic spaces that are recognised actualise positions and negotiations in everyday practices in relation to the teachers' professional identities. The findings are expected to be useful as a constructive starting point for policymakers, teacher trainers, and school-age educare teachers to understand this specific educational context and the need for professional development. This study contributes to a further understanding of the multifaceted professional identities of school-age educare teachers.

**Keywords:** Dilemmatic spaces, extended education, leisure, pupils, school-age educare, teachers

## Introduction

During the past two decades, there has been a growing global interest in the field of extended education, “which is increasingly developing into a global culture of education” (Bae & Kanefuji, 2018, p. 27). Countries in both the East and the West are investing in developing systems to support pupils' learning outside of traditional school hours (Schuepbach & Huang, 2018). These settings offer education and/or care opportunities.

This article focuses on extended education in Sweden in terms of school-age educare (SAEC). In 1996, SAEC was integrated into compulsory schooling. Almost 20 years later, Skolverket, the Swedish National Agency for Education, revised the national curriculum to encompass SAEC. These developments have placed an increased focus on the teaching and learning outcomes of SAEC; simultaneously, several economic cuts have been made regarding the structural conditions of the settings (Lager, 2020). SAEC is most often located in school buildings, thus sharing physical space with compulsory schools. The setting holds the goals to strive for, but it does not stipulate the goals to attain. The educational programme in

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Swedish SAEC should complement preschool and primary classes by offering pupils meaningful recreational and leisure activities and stimulating their holistic development and learning (Skolverket, 2022). Approximately 85% of all young pupils in Sweden attend SAEC, which is heavily subsidised by the state. Because of the high enrolment rate, SAEC constitutes a significant part of childhood for most children. It plays a very important role, therefore, when it comes to equity for disadvantaged children (Hjalmarsson & Odenbring, 2020).

Due to the new School Act (SFS 2010:800) and revised curricula (Skolverket, 2016), SAEC teachers must balance the aspects of voluntariness, care, and learning in the processes of their planning, teaching, and evaluation (Hjalmarsson, 2019). There are several challenges to introducing teaching in this educational setting. SAEC teachers should safeguard the traditional focus of SAEC (care and common values), and the pupils' initiatives, interests, and needs should be a starting point for experience-based activities. At the same time, teachers should conduct teaching that corresponds to the core content of SAEC's curriculum and includes (1) language and communication, (2) creative and aesthetic forms of expression, (3) nature and society, and (4) games, physical activities, and outdoor excursions (Skolverket, 2022). Furthermore, because SAEC is offered to pupils 6–13 years old, who are enrolled for varying amounts of time due to their parents' work or school hours, teaching should be implemented in age-heterogeneous groups that vary in size. With no traditional classroom, the physical conditions of SAEC differ from those of compulsory school, and the educational backgrounds of the staff vary and are often insufficient (Skolverket, 2021). The staff are also obligated to teach during the regular school day in compulsory schools, and mostly they collaborate with compulsory schoolteachers in teams, working in preschool classes and in compulsory settings. Taken together, these challenges can create unique opportunities for teaching and learning in SAEC and foster the potential for pupils' identity and knowledge development. The challenges and opportunities of SAEC constitute the important framework conditions for this study, which aims to deepen the understanding of the potential dilemmas SAEC teachers face.

## Research Overview: Extended Education

As interest in out-of-school time and extracurricular learning during childhood and adolescence has increased (Schuepbach, 2018), many efforts have been made to expand institutional education and use after-school hours to supplement school learning in almost every country in Europe, North America, South America, Asia, and Australia. In recent years, the term *extended education* has frequently been used internationally to define the field of education (Schuepbach & Huang, 2018). Extended education refers to non-formal education in which attendance is voluntary. It can be offered in the morning before school starts, in the afternoon and evening after school ends, during breaks within school hours, and during holidays. The focus is on children's emotional, social, and academic development and learning, and the settings are structured educationally to promote participants' learning of general or specific content (Schuepbach, 2018).

Extended education varies between countries. Bae and Kanefuji (2018) compared after-school programmes in two neighbouring Asian countries, Korea and Japan. The authors

# Unmasking Student Dynamics: the Impact of COVID-19 on Social-Emotional Development and Learning Engagement<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This study aimed to examine the impact of COVID-19 on the pattern of social-emotional development and learning engagement of Korean students. It employs latent profile analysis to categorize middle and high school students based on their social-emotional development (action-orientation, optimism, perseverance, relationship with adults) and learning engagement (cooperative learning, and self-directed learning). The analysis, conducted during the fall semester of 2019 and the spring semester of 2020 amid COVID-19 school closures, explores nuanced patterns and effects. The findings reveal distinct student groups with discernible differences across all factors both before and during school closure. Notably, the research suggests that early social-emotional development may influence subsequent developmental stages and that a student's social-emotional skills correlate with cooperative and self-directed learning. Furthermore, the study highlights the pandemic's varied impact on student groups, indicating that those with advanced social-emotional competencies and established learning practices were resilient to school closures. In contrast, 'average' students faced challenges in cooperative and active learning during lockdown. The study underscores the need for targeted educational measures, particularly for at-risk students, and suggests proactive preparation for future pandemics.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Social-emotional development, Learning engagement, LPA

## Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of education, children's growth and development are intricately woven into their interactions with diverse social agents, encompassing teachers, peers, and family members (Dewey, 1938). The quality and nature of these intellectual exchanges, whether within the structured confines of the educational institution or in the broader societal context, wield considerable influence over students' academic achievements and socio-emotional development. In this context, public schools actively foster diverse interactions to mitigate dropouts and enhance learning outcomes, employing strategies like learning community activities, cooperative learning, mentoring programs, and extracurricular pursuits. Notably, enriched engagements with parents and siblings at home also play a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of a child's growth.

The landscape of education, however, underwent a seismic shift with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, which profoundly affected students' classroom activities and daily

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lives in the Korean context over the 2019-2020 period. The imposition of lockdowns, a consequence of social distancing policies, forced most Korean schools to close their doors, compelling students into a realm of online remote learning. This isolated them from the conventional school environment, disrupting the accustomed academic and social interactions. In this unprecedented context, it is reasonable to hypothesize that the dynamics of interpersonal interactions, whether for learning, socializing, or recreational activities, underwent significant transformations. Students may have experienced a sense of disconnection, lacking the stimuli and experiences essential for their holistic growth and development. More importantly, the lockdown might have engendered a discriminatory impact, with variations in the socioeconomic status of parents, family's social and cultural capital, and engagement in social network services (SNS) potentially differentially affecting students and, consequently, influencing their learning and social-emotional development.

The purpose of this study is to categorize students based on the degree and pattern of their social-emotional development and learning engagement. It particularly seeks to unravel the changes between two distinct periods—the fall semester of 2019, preceding the COVID-19 outbreak, and the spring semester of 2020, marked by school closures and restricted academic and social interactions. The observed variables for social-emotional development encompass activity orientation, perseverance, optimism, and relationships with adults. Concurrently, students' learning engagement patterns are examined through the lenses of cooperative learning and self-directed learning.

The onset of the pandemic precipitated alterations in the landscape of academic activities, ushering in new teaching-learning paradigms (Bae & Hwang, 2020). As schools transitioned to remote learning, students found themselves navigating predominantly pre-recorded and real-time interactive classes, markedly distinct from traditional face-to-face instruction (Bae & Cho, 2021). The learning environment, mediated by learning management systems, witnessed a shift in the modality of class management, student discussions, and teacher-student interactions. Extended education including extracurricular activities, sports, and leisure activities dwindled, limiting socio-emotional exchanges among students. Furthermore, exposure to negative news and the prolonged isolation imposed by the lockdown heightened the risk of psychological distress among students, accentuating the impact on their social and emotional development.

The significance of the study lies in its nuanced exploration of how students' socio-emotional development and learning experiences evolve amidst a lockdown situation and an online-based remote learning environment. As the specter of future pandemics looms, understanding the repercussions of COVID-19 on students becomes imperative to preemptively devise educational measures. This study not only sheds light on the adaptive strategies employed by students in online learning environments but also identifies groups that may require tailored educational support amidst the challenges posed by social distancing and school closures. In offering academic and practical implications, this study equips educational authorities with insights to navigate the unpredictable terrain of future crises, safeguarding students' growth, and fortifying the quality of education. The results of the study will contribute to providing information that can be used for educators and policymakers to identify students who need special educational measurements and develop tailored educational practices and policies in a pandemic situation that may come again in the future.