

# All-Day Schools and Social Work: A Swiss Case Study

*Emanuela Chiapparini, Andrea Scholian, Patricia Schuler, Christa Kappler*

**Abstract:** All-day schools are becoming more widespread in Switzerland. They enable pupils to participate in lunchtime and extracurricular activities organized and supervised mostly by social workers. Qualitative data were collected for a project on newly implemented area-wide all-day schools in Zurich, Switzerland's largest city. The research was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). Findings indicate that the resulting structural, pedagogical, spatial, and staff changes significantly impact the social work setting. The importance and potential of social work needs to be better communicated to the all-day school community.

**Key words:** all-day schools, leisure time, extracurricular activities, social work, evidence-informed research

## Introduction: Social Work at All-Day Schools

Over the past 10 years, the federal states of Switzerland have been restructuring their education systems in order to offer country-wide all-day schooling. Such programs are becoming more widespread in Switzerland, especially in the cities of Basel, Geneva, Bern, and Zurich (Chiapparini, Schuler, & Kappler, 2016). This development is expanding the social work setting compared to mainstream schooling: All-day schools enable pupils to participate in before-school, lunchtime, and after-school extracurricular activities and programs<sup>1</sup> (Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education [EDK], 2015). This new system tasks social workers working at all-day schools in Switzerland are mostly involved in the care setting before and after lessons and at lunchtime. They have different educational backgrounds, e.g., a bachelor's degree, a completed childcare apprenticeship, or no specialized education (Chiapparini, Selami, Schuler, & Kappler, 2018).<sup>2</sup> with providing pupils with support and access to social and cultural resources beyond the classroom.

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1 All-day schools in Zurich offer "extracurricular activities" and "after school programs" (Vandell, Larson, Mahoney, & Watts, 2015).

2 Social workers working at all-day schools in Switzerland are mostly involved in the care setting before and after lessons and at lunchtime. They have different educational backgrounds, e.g., a bachelor's degree, a completed childcare apprenticeship, or no specialized education (Chiapparini et al., 2018b).

Consequently, extended school days and additional responsibilities are enhancing the role of social workers at all-day schools (Thole & Hüblich, 2014).

In 2016, the city of Zurich became the first Swiss municipality to introduce area-wide all-day programs at all regular schools. These programs differ from those implemented in other cities in Canton Zurich or in other Swiss cantons. Pupils are expected to remain at school for a number of lunchtimes per week (e.g., three lunchtimes at elementary school). Although parents are allowed to opt out of the lunch program, this seldom happens (Feller & Dietrich, 2018).

Emerging all-day schooling and social work at such schools were studied in an SNSF research project on pedagogical responsibilities (“Aushandlungsprozesse der pädagogischen Zuständigkeiten an Tagesschulen im Spannungsfeld öffentlicher Erziehung; AusTER”) (Chiapparini et al., 2016). The data from this qualitative, large-scale research are particularly well suited to addressing the main question raised here: How does implementing all-day schooling impact social work at such schools (see next section)?

First, we review the relevant evidence-informed research. Second, we discuss the data collection method used in the SNSF project and our approach to analyzing that data here. Third, we look at the changes resulting from implementing all-day school programs and consider their impacts on social work settings from various perspectives (pupils, parents, teachers, and social workers). Finally, we discuss the implications of our findings and offer recommendations for future research.

## Literature Review: Impact on School Performance and Personal Development at All-Day Schools

To date, little research has been conducted on implementing all-day schooling in Switzerland (Weinbach, Coelen, Dollinger, Munsch, & Rohrmann, 2017) or how its impact social work at such schools (Chiapparini et al., 2018b).

Most studies on social work at all-day schools have tried to determine the effectiveness of all-day schooling and to help pupils perform better academically and socially. Schüpbach, Mous, Wustmann, and Bolz (2007) investigated the extent to which participation in all-day schooling influences pupils’ performance (in mathematics and German) and their social behavior. The authors investigated social work at different types of all-day-schools. They found that while most social workers offered free-play programs, and ensured that homework was completed without well-targeted assistance, they seldom offered extracurricular programs.

Research results have been contradictory. Whereas an initial survey of Grades 1, 2, and 3 observed minor effects on mathematics (Schüpbach, 2014), a follow-up survey indicated no significant impact (von Allmen, Schüpbach, Frei, & Nieuwenboom, 2018). A study on the development of all-day schools (StEG) in Germany found no evidence that participation in all-day programs improves pupils’ academic performance (Fischer et al., 2011; Fischer, Kuhn, & Tillack, 2016). However, regular participation in high-quality extracurricular activities at all-day schools (both primary and secondary) resulted in better social behavior (Fischer et al., 2016). Similar findings were confirmed by Linberg, Struck, and Bäumer

(2018), who explained how all-day schools in Germany enable other forms of learning. A similar study (Fischer et al., 2016) indicated that voluntary participation in an extracurricular reading program (at secondary school) had a greater impact on reading performance. These results suggest that implementing all-day schooling is widely expected to impact school social work and to enhance performance (Seckiger & van Santen, 2009).

Learning can take different forms at all-day schools (e.g., Linberg et al., 2018), not only in the classroom but also during extracurricular activities. Evidence comes from studying the duties and responsibilities of social workers at such schools: organizing and supervising leisure activities and open spaces, offering voluntary participation, managing diversity and conflicts, and promoting pupil well-being (e.g., Chiapparini, Stohler, & Bussmann, 2018c). One major benefit of all-day schools is that spending more time at school improves different types of learning and thus enhances not only pupils' academic performance but also the school's performance (Schuler, Kappler, & Chiapparini, 2019). Other benefits include more opportunities for pupils to pursue personal interests, to develop their identity and personality, and to strengthen their relationships with peers and adult role models (Scherr, 2008). Nevertheless, barely any relevant research findings are available to date (Sauerwein, Thieme, & Chiapparini, 2019). Recent research in the cities of Basel and Zurich point to the importance of open spaces for pupils and of developing leisure activities and programs at all-day schools designed to enhance pupil well-being (Chiapparini, 2019). There is, however, a clear lack of systematic analysis of the impact of all-day programs on social work at such schools. In Switzerland, this is due to two factors: first, the differing models of all-day schools (Chiapparini et al., 2016) and second, the difficulty of clearly categorizing the benefits of participating in all-day school leisure activities (Scherr, 2008).

Andresen (2016) notes that existing research on the implementation of all-day schools in Germany has focused on teaching or school subjects, as confirmed by the above literature review. She argues that it is important to define extracurricular activities at all-day schools and to incorporate the views of those concerned in program development. This also applies to implementation in Switzerland. The present study aims to contribute to the scant research on this subject and thus to help improve implementation.

We raise two main questions: How do the changes resulting from implementing all-day schooling impact the corresponding social work setting? How do the key stakeholders (pupils, parents, teachers, and social workers) perceive the changes to the social work setting in terms of their own needs?

We believe that studying these perspectives illuminates the ambiguous and unintended consequences of implementing all-day schooling on the structural, pedagogical, staff, and spatial levels (Chiapparini et al., 2018b). Answering the above questions is important for further implementation and for understanding the social work setting at all-day schools, which should not be shaped too strongly by pedagogical tenets (Coelen, 2007; Andresen, 2016).

## Method

This study is part of a larger research project on pedagogical responsibilities (AusTER) at all-day schools. Data collection and analysis are based on grounded theory (Glaser &

Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1991). This approach allows differentiating and thus considering the perspectives of key actors. According to symbolic interactionism, people do not act “because they behave functionally to structural conditions, but because they give meaning to the conditions and thus create the conditions themselves” (Abels, 2010, p. 46). Thus, meanings are “social products” whose use “takes place by the actor in an interpretation process” (Abels, 2010, pp. 46–47). As a result, the different ways in which individuals ascribe meaning to objects, events, and experiences become the starting point of research in general.

Methodologically, an individual’s view is reconstructed through the subjective theories with which he or she explains the world (Flick, 2007). This qualitative, evidence-informed approach was adopted here to capture the involved social workers’ thoughts, opinions, feelings, and experiences. These provide insight into how implementing all-day school programs affects the work of social worker, which in turn impacts pupils and program success. Researching these questions is much needed, not least because so far no “theory of all-day education” (Coelen & Stecher, 2014) exists and because the existing research is weak (see section 2).

Our cross-case research on pedagogical responsibilities (AusTER) analyzed four newly launched all-day school programs in the city of Zurich and compared these at two points in time: summer 2016 (shortly before launch) and autumn 2017.<sup>3</sup> Data was collected from 104 interviews (Schütze, 1983) and group discussions (Bohnsack, Loos, Schäffer, Städtler, & Wild, 1995) with 108 people who had experienced program implementation. From these data, we used grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1991) to analyze interviews and group discussions with 32 pupils, 16 parents, and 18 teachers from lower, middle, and upper all-day schools and with 15 social workers. Stakeholder descriptions and narratives about everyday school life and events, which were kept as open as possible, were analyzed in three steps: 1) open codes (e.g. being together with friends); 2) axial codes (e.g., constancy of peers over three lunches); 3) synthetic codes (e.g., positive meaning of the same peers for forming friendships). While open coding was carried out by one researcher at a time, axial coding and selective coding were performed by a group of researchers to ensure that all relevant categories were included and irrelevant ones excluded. Data were processed systematically using the MAXqda software program. Qualitative analysis of the transcribed interactions enabled identifying similar views among the various stakeholders. Ambiguous results were identified and discussed.

## Empirical Findings

We present our empirical findings in terms of our two research questions: how do the changes resulting from implementing all-day schooling impact the corresponding social work setting? How do the key stakeholders (pupils, parents, teachers, and social workers) perceive the changes to the social work setting?

The main changes were structural. At the investigated elementary school, three lunch days and a subsequent extracurricular program were compulsory (i.e., the cancellation option was

3 In 2016, five all-day schools were introduced in the city of Zurich, of which four contrasting all-day schools (in terms of size and social context) were selected for the AusTER research project (cf. Chiapparini et al., 2016).

barely used). This explains the increase in the number of lunchtime participants. On Mondays and Fridays, over 90% of all pupils stayed at school for lunch (Feller & Dietrich, 2018).<sup>4</sup>

On the pedagogical level, pupils had access to leisure activities after afternoon classes and during lunchtime, even if this was reduced from 120 to 80 minutes. Further, no more homework assignments were set at this school. Instead, voluntary assistance was provided to deepen classroom subjects during extracurricular activities. However, program change means that more extracurricular activities were (or are still being) developed. In 2018, only a few schools expanded their provision to after-class activities. Participation was low, particularly after the second year of all-day schooling.

All-day schooling also means less physical space per pupil (Schumacher, Müller, & Johann, 2018), while on the staff level, fewer qualified social workers are available per pupil than in the old program (Chiapparini et al., 2018b).

Our findings indicate that implementing all-day programs fundamentally changed both settings (schooling and social work), particularly with regard to lunchtime and after-class activities.

Against the background of these changes, we observed that *pupils* attending all-day schools generally appreciate spending more time (moreover, on a regular basis) with the same friends at lunch. They also identify more with their school and generally like the new system. Interestingly, the interviewed pupils did not mention the social workers, although these are responsible for running and supervising leisure and extracurricular activities, and thus provide the socio-educational framework necessary for self-directed learning and for building peer relationships. Further, the pupils enjoy unsupervised free play indoors, outdoors, and in open spaces. These spaces, however, are limited. For example, in a school with 200 pupils only two small closed rooms are occasionally available for peer interaction.

The interviewed *parents* rarely mention extracurricular (after-class) activities or programs, nor the quality of the free play or self-organized activities offered at lunchtime. As one mother remarked, they are more interested in good organization and well-supervised free play, as well as lunchtime and extracurricular activities. Some parents do not consider learning and receiving support from social workers (during leisure time or extracurricular activities) important. Unlike academic performance, which is considered very important. While parents are keen to follow their child's learning progress, the absence of homework has made this difficult.

Overall, *teachers* make no direct demands on social workers, nor do they claim to cooperate with them. However, some teachers mentioned that they actively cooperate with social workers at lunchtime or during supervised free play or extracurricular (i.e., after-class) activities. Teachers tend to consider social work to be educational. It is also seen to involve imparting social rules and etiquette, which also happens in class. In contrast, the interviewed *social workers* associate their work less with education and regulation than with personal development. This is particularly noticeable in the upper grades.

The interviewed social workers identified three main opportunities of implementing all-day school programs for their work setting, which involves coping with more pupils in a

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4 In addition, lunchtime meals cost six Swiss francs, which generally is less than before, as the previous price depended on parents' or guardians' income and ranged from 4.50 to 33 Swiss francs (*Schul- und Sportdepartement*, 2017).

narrower (lunchtime) timeframe, moreover with less staff (proportional to the number of pupils at regular schools):

(1) To promote pupils' *personal development*, social workers encourage them to make decisions, become more independent, and assume responsibilities. Unlike teachers, social workers do not focus on teaching pupils manners, but on developing their personality and interests. They offer pupils a wide variety of extracurricular activities (e.g., football, reading in the library, playing board games, and free play in the gym). They provide supervision and, if necessary, help pupils identify their needs and make decisions.

Social workers have learned to adjust to the increased number of pupils in their charge. Before the introduction of all-day schools, pupils had fewer extracurricular activities to choose from and less freedom how to spend their lunchtime. The interviewed social workers take into account pupils' need for freedom, self-organization, and self-determination. In addition, the newly opened cafeterias at all-day schools allow pupils to decide when and how long they eat lunch. The social workers pointed out that the new freedoms and flexibility also involve limits and restrictions. Moreover, some pupils struggle to handle their new freedom of choice and to organize themselves during lunchtime and thus require more support.

Finally, all-day schools enable pupils to take responsibility, which is crucial to ensuring equity in education and personal development. For example, a social worker may encourage a pupil with a speech impediment to play with a group while supporting it to include that pupil. This helps pupils assume responsibility.

(2) Social workers help pupils to appropriately address the social issues (e.g., conflict or exclusion) often arising from increased pupil numbers at all-day schools. Further, the social workers reported that identifying all pupils' needs has become more challenging. This is true especially with quiet pupils or those who blend in with the crowd, thus making it harder to provide those in need with individualized support.

(3) Social workers can more constructively support age-specific peer dynamics. Especially social workers at secondary schools indicated that lunchtime peer group activities can be conducted purposefully to promote friendships and responsible behavior among pupils and to enable age-specific learning. They therefore perceive lunchtime as a positive educational setting, one that also enables social workers to interact pedagogically with pupils. Although responsibility for harmonizing controlled learning processes and self-directed peer group dynamics lies with school social workers, little is known about how to accomplish this objective.

## Conclusion

Among other goals, expanding all-day schools in Switzerland aims to interlink classes and extracurricular activities. The social work setting has increased as a result. However, research on all-day schooling in Switzerland is limited and has so far focused on academic achievement rather than personal development (Andresen, 2016; Sauerwein et al., 2019). Further, existing evidence-based quantitative research on all-day schooling barely supports the correlation between participation in all-day programs, academic performance, and social behavior (Fischer, Radisch & Schüpbach, 2014; Ecarius, 2013).

Against this background, this study applied a qualitative, evidence-informed approach to explore how implementing all-day schooling impacts the social work setting. By way of example, it studied the introduction of such programs in the city of Zurich since 2016.

In response to our research questions, we found:

1) All-day programs impact the corresponding social work setting in a differentiated way and on four levels. On the structural level, shorter lunchtimes are a crucial period in that fewer social workers are tasked with supervising more children. At the same time, implementing all-day schooling grants all children access to more extracurricular activities. Extracurricular activities during lunchtime are especially popular, but those after-class are gaining ground. On the spatial level, while program implementation increases the number of pupils over lunch, it decreases the number of available places, especially for free play. On the staff level, the number of social workers hired at all-day schools was relatively low relative to the number of pupils. Therefore, their potential professionalism cannot be fully exhausted, as exploring our second question suggested:

How do the key all-day school stakeholders (pupils, parents, teachers, and social workers) perceive the changes to the social work setting in terms of their own needs?

All-day school programs are viewed positively by pupils, as they can spend more time with their peers on a more regular basis (during lunchtime and extracurricular activities). These effects highlight that such programs extend learning (e.g., Linberg et al., 2018). In order to provide pupils with diverse forms of learning and opportunities aimed at developing their personalities and friendships, all-day schools could offer a greater variety of supervised and guided extracurricular activities as well as undirected free-play time (Scherr, 2008).

While all-day schooling should aim to connect the class to extracurricular activities, most teachers do not show much interest in the social work setting. This is probably due to two factors: varying perceptions of the role and responsibilities of teachers and social workers (Chiapparini, Selmani, Kappler, & Schuler, 2018a) and the available time.

Parents have very few demands or expectations about the extracurricular activities supervised by social workers. However, data analysis revealed that such activities are important for pupils and therefore should be organized efficiently. More research should be conducted on how social workers can ensure extracurricular activities and how social education outcomes are met.

Social workers see many opportunities for supporting pupils at all-day schools: helping them develop their personality and explore their interests through extracurricular activities; using their expertise to help pupils deal with personal and school-related issues (e.g., conflicts or social exclusion); and encouraging pupils to develop friendships and promote positive peer group effects, especially during lunchtime and extracurricular activities.

Awareness of the importance of the social work setting at all-day schools needs to be enhanced among teachers, pupils, and parents. In addition, appropriate structural, pedagogical, spatial, and staff conditions are required to support the potentials of this setting. Social workers clearly add value to all-day school programs, yet this is not recognized by many members of the school and the wider community. Awareness and appreciation of the role of social workers at all-day schools is central to establishing strong links between the curriculum and extracurricular activities (Stadtrat von Zürich, 2017b).

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