

When one Wants More than the Other: Multi-Professional Cooperation between Staff in Extended Education and Teachers

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Abstract: In 2021 the Swiss Teachers' Association (LCH) demanded that extended education offerings (EEO) should be the responsibility of schools and not outsourced, which in turn also implies a new cooperation partner for the schools. Till today not much is known about this cooperation. This study investigates this cooperation from the perspective of the cooperation partners – the teachers (N=233), school leaders (N=64), staff (N=349) and leaders (N=67) of the EEO by means of a quantitative survey in a pioneering canton in Switzerland. The findings show that cooperation is rated as “good”—but for different reasons—by the cooperation partners and that cooperation is linked to job satisfaction.

Keywords: cooperation, teacher, staff of extended education offerings, job satisfaction

Introduction

For some years now extended education has been expanding in Switzerland. This has been triggered by societal developments such as demographic change, changes in the labour market and family structures as well as the sobering PISA results (Schuepbach et al., 2017; Schuepbach, 2018a). The expansion of extended education is not a unique feature of the Swiss education system or of other European countries such as, for example, Germany (Kunze & Reh, 2020; Mattes & Reh, 2020) or Sweden (Klerfelt & Stecher, 2018). In fact, it is flourishing all over the world (Bae, 2018). Expectations associated with this expansion are high, ranging from improved equity, inclusion and educational outcomes to a better work-life balance (Herzog, 2009). However, studies show that extended education in its current form does not always have the expected effect (Sauerwein et al., 2019; Schuepbach et al., 2012) and that the effects that do occur depend on its quality and its structure (e.g. its linkage to the school) (Zuechner & Fischer, 2014). If the EEO is more closely linked to the school a higher degree of cooperation and participation occurs (Forrer Kasteel & Schuler, 2010) and the EEO can contribute even more to equal opportunities, as more time is available, to support (dis-advantaged) children in the integration and educational development. EEO represents a different learning arrangement and allows children to be perceived differently than in school, thus enabling a more “holistic perception” of the child (Lago & Elvstrand, 2019; Näpfli & Strittmatter, 2021).

In Switzerland the cantons and municipalities are responsible for implementing EEO, and therefore a multitude of structurally different offerings can be identified, the different emphases of which are also expressed in the various terms used (Schuepbach, 2018b). We will follow the proposition of Schuepbach et al. (2017, p. 58) and will consequently use the term “extended education offerings”. The Swiss Teachers' Association describes the advancement

and expansion of EEO as one of the most significant current developments in the Swiss education system alongside the introduction of inclusive education and digital transformation (LCH, 2021). The LCH demands that EEO should be the responsibility of schools in terms of both content and organization and that together they should form a “school living space”. If the EEO are organized by others then the school the quality of EEO can’t be (equally) guaranteed and a systematic coupling of the two systems isn’t possible (LCH, 2021) which are, as mentioned before, both key conditions for the EEO’s effect (Chiapparini et al., 2018; LCH, 2021).

With the increasing importance of learning in extracurricular and out-of-school educational contexts (Kielblock, et al., 2020), multi-professional cooperation is becoming crucial (Olk et al., 2011) and an essential requirement for successful school development, especially in the implementation of all-day schools (Jutzi et al., 2016; Jutzi & Woodland, 2019; Maag Merki, 2015) and in the discourse on school quality (Fend, 2006; Speck et al., 2011). Even though regular teaching and EEO are usually considered as two distinctive organisations, EEO often serve as a bridge between home and school for children and their parents, which is another reason why cooperation between the two organisations is essential.

Findings on teacher cooperation indicate that teachers who do cooperate are less stressed and report higher job satisfaction, as cooperation is seen as a reflection of the social climate in school (Olsen & Huang, 2019; Toropova et al., 2021). Notwithstanding the higher levels of difficulty in multi-professional collaboration, Valentin, Fischer, and Kuhn (2019) demonstrate that aspiring professionals can be taught to understand collaboration as a form of professional and emotional support and to recognize the benefits of collaboration for improving school and classroom practice.

To date there has been little research on multi-professional cooperation between teachers and staff of EEO in Switzerland and there is a particular need for further research on opportunities for multi-professional cooperation (Schuler et al., 2019, p. 94; Boehm-Kaspar et al., 2016). Initial findings suggest that a lack of understanding of the other profession is an impeding factor for symmetrical professional collaboration in Switzerland (Schuler Braunschweig et al., 2019).

This study investigates multi-professional cooperation between teachers at primary schools and the staff engaged in EEO in a pioneering canton in Switzerland. Results from teacher cooperation shows that cooperation is linked to job satisfaction. We would like to find out whether this effect can also be found in multi-professional cooperation settings. Higher job satisfaction and the accompanying lower turnover rate would lead to lasting relationships between children and the staff of EEO, which also has an influence on the well-being of the children (Bloechliger & Bauer, 2016). So, this study examines the relationship between multi-professional cooperation and job satisfaction.

Context of the Study and the Situation in Switzerland

The education system in Switzerland is federally governed, and the 26 cantons are responsible for the schools. So, not surprisingly, there are no national guidelines on the organization of EEO. There is only an obligation that all cantons provide “a demand-oriented offer for the care

of pupils outside regular school time” (EDK, 2007, § 11, sect. 2). Some cantons, namely, those pioneering cantons in extended education, regulate the EEO in their laws governing cantonal public schools (Schuepbach & von Allmen, 2013, p. 19). Other cantons regulate extended education offerings in their cantonal social services laws. The state of EEO in Switzerland is therefore heterogeneous: they can be compulsory, meaning that all pupils attend certain EEO time slots in addition to regular hours of school instruction, or they can be non-compulsory, meaning that parents can choose from different modules. Another distinguishing feature is whether the school itself or other providers are responsible for the organisation of the EEO (BFS, 2020). This has an impact on the location of EEO (Schuepbach, 2014) and on the cooperation between schools and EEO. Thus, the degree of cooperation between schools and EEO differs from canton to canton. Some are already close to fulfilling the demands made by the LCH whereas in other cantons, no fields of cooperation have been regulated.

The canton studied is one of the pioneering cantons in Switzerland in the field of EEO. The focus of the EEO is on social skills and is leisure-oriented, but homework support is also becoming increasingly important. Opportunities for cooperation arise especially in homework support, but also in jointly planned and implemented projects. Parents can choose different time slots (modules) for their children to attend, which means it is not compulsory even if at least four fixed modules must be chosen for one year. In this canton the school comprises EEO and regular classroom teaching. Therefore, the concept of “school” is expanded from a focus exclusively on teaching to include EEO. As part of the school, the EEO are also the responsibility of the school principal but have their own EEO leader. A hierarchical structure is therefore created linking the EEO and the teaching domain. Cooperation between the two domains and its implementation must be laid down in the guidelines of the school. So even if it is a non-compulsory offering – our data stem from a canton which regulates cooperation between the teaching domain and EEO – it already fulfils the demands made by the LCH (2021).

Review of Literature

We will first take a brief look at the definitions of collaboration and cooperation. Then we will review findings on cooperation in school and finally look at the cooperation between EEO and teachers.

Cooperation and Collaboration – a brief Look at Definitions

Roschelle and Teasley (1995, p. 70) describe cooperative work as a task that is accomplished by dividing it among participants, where “each person is responsible for a portion of the problem solving,” and they see collaborative work as “the mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve the problem together”. In their widely used cooperation model Graesel et al. (2006) distinguish between three levels of cooperation. The first level, *exchange*, means that information and materials are exchanged. The second level, *division of labour*, implies a need to coordinate goals and responsibilities in completing the common task. The third level of cooperation is *co-construction* where the cooperation partners profitably com-

bine their knowledge and skills (Graesel, et al., 2006). According to Spiess (2018), successful cooperation requires that the cooperation partners agree on goals, exchange information and support each other and can thus develop mutual *trust* while maintaining a certain degree of autonomy. On examining these different definitions, *collaboration* seems to be what Spiess (2018) calls a successful cooperation and what, in the model of Graesel et al. (2006) is called *co-construction*. We further use the term cooperation as it fits for the different forms and intensity of collaborative working.

Cooperation in Schools and its Effects

Conditions for successful cooperation as well as the expected effects for teacher and multi-professional cooperation are similar, but differences can be found: the cooperation partners in multi-professional cooperation differ in profession and thus in terms of their goals and roles. Differences in training standards, socialization and salaries are additional challenges that further influence the success of multi-professional cooperation. Therefore, crucial conditions for successful multi-professional cooperation are: clarity of goals, roles and tasks as well as individual attitudes towards and perceptions of cooperation (Luetje-Klose & Urban, 2014; Wichmann, 2014).

Cooperation between School and EEO

In Germany, where more and more all-day schools are being established, the degree of cooperation between schools and EEOs is generally low and usually takes the form of exchanges rather than collaboration (Boehm-Kasper et al., 2016; Fussangel & Graesel, 2014). Similarities are found for Sweden and Switzerland, where is reported that there is a lack of knowledge of the other profession and the cooperation was generally “doing something before or after the other” (Schuler et al., 2019, p. 92).

It is evident that EEO and regular teaching are viewed as autonomous divisions: one is responsible for teaching and the EEO for organized free time. The cooperation partners differ in how they understand educational objectives and the tasks of EEO (Boehm-Kasper et al., 2016). EEO staff should be accorded greater recognition since they have the potential to extend learning through employing different approaches without undermining the role of the teachers (Gaiser et al., 2016).

EEO staff have a greater desire to cooperate than teachers, who often pragmatically state that they simply do not have time to collaborate (Arnold, 2009; Holtappels et al., 2008; Speck et al., 2011) and that this cooperation does not directly affect their practice (Niehoff et al., 2014). Specific interventions – for example, in teacher education – are needed to change these attitudes (Valentin et al., 2019). To date, the research is not very clear on whether collaboration has an effect and in which direction this effect goes. Positive (rewards) and negative effects (costs) are discussed. According to the *social exchange theory* the explanation of behavior in social relationships is based on rewards and costs that arise in the interaction of two or more interactants. Following this cooperation must be for both rewarding. For the teachers the cooperation means a reduction in workload, as they can delegate some non-instructional tasks to the non-teaching staff – as they see the EEO as a “service” (Boehm-Kasper et al., 2016). For

the EEO, a closer connection to the school (Dahl & Karlsudd, 2015, p. 23) leads to a clearer professional identity, higher professional status as they share the curriculum (*ibid.*, p. 32) and strengthen their understanding of their profession (Jutzi et al., 2016). Cooperation also comes at a cost, as time slots must be found and roles, functions and tasks negotiated. Insufficient knowledge of each other's field of work and asymmetrical collaboration are two key obstacles to cooperation, reported in this field (Boehm-Kasper et al., 2016; Bueckel et al., 2014; Chiapparini, 2017; Chiapparini et al., 2018, Schuler et al., 2019). Cooperation needs trust as there is uncertainty regarding the intentions, competencies work quality and reliability of the partner, especially at the beginning of the cooperation. Structural problems and asymmetrical cooperation make it difficult to build trust between the cooperation partners (Fabel-Lamla, 2012).

Research Questions

In the context of this study multi-professional cooperation is considered from the perspective of the cooperation partners involved and the following questions will be answered:

- (1) How do the cooperation partners perceive their cooperation and task performance of EEO as well as their job satisfaction?
- (2) What is the task of EEO and what do the EEO staff see as their responsibilities?

EEO fulfil different tasks with differing orientations. We assume that EEO staff see academically oriented tasks as less their responsibility than recreation and social competencies-oriented tasks.

- (3) Are task performance, cooperation and job satisfaction linked among EEO staff and among teachers?

Spiess (2018) places emphasis on the different tasks of the cooperation partners and that there should be clarity about these tasks as a condition for successful cooperation. Thus, it is assumed that there is a positive link between task performance and cooperation among EEO staff. Findings from teacher cooperation shows that cooperation is positively linked to job satisfaction and so we will investigate if this link can also be found for the EEO staff (Olsen & Huang, 2019; Toropova et al., 2021).

For the first and third question, differences in perception of the cooperation partners will be examined as multi-professional cooperation between EEO and teacher is – as reported above – often asymmetrical; revealing this asymmetry is one goal of this paper.

Methods

The research adopted a quantitative approach to explore cooperation and task performance among EEO staff and the job satisfaction of teachers and EEO staff. To achieve this, a cross-sectional survey was conducted of all EEO staff as well as of all school leaders, and a sample

of teachers at ten primary schools in one Swiss canton. Participants received a link to an online questionnaire via email. Each participant was assigned a personal ID code to pseudo-anonymize the data. Data was collected between 2018 and 2019. For each subject, the affiliation to the domain of EEO and the domain of teaching, respectively, as well as the function (leader vs staff) was recorded. Table 1 shows the sample.

Table 1. Sample

domain	EEO	Teaching
function	leader	staff
N	64	233

42.6% of all the participants are younger than 40 years old. 54.5% of the participants have less than seven years of experience in their role and 39.5% work more than 3.5 days per week.

The instrument used was developed in 2016 by a group of experts consisting of teachers and school leaders, representatives of the Department of Education and the School of Education FHNW and was reviewed and tested by various researchers. The questionnaire was adapted by EEO experts for use with EEO staff members.

Cooperation was measured with 5 items on a six-point response scale, with higher values being associated with a higher perceived quality of cooperation (e.g. “The cooperation between the EEO and the other areas of our school works well.”; $\alpha=.86$). *Task performance of the EEO* was measured with 5 items on a six-point response scale, with higher values being associated with a higher perceived quality of *task performance of the EEO* (e.g. “The EEO support living together and a sense of belonging for the whole school.”; $\alpha=.87$). *Job Satisfaction* was measured with 5 items on a six-point response scale, with higher values being associated with a higher job satisfaction (e.g. “I enjoy working at this school.”; $\alpha=.91$). For the three scales the calculated Cronbach Alpha coefficient of reliability is above .80 indicating high reliability.

Social-competencies oriented task was measured with 5 items (e.g. improvement of conflict-resolution skills, $\alpha_{\text{actual}}=.83$, $\alpha_{\text{ideal}}=.76$) and is reliable.

Recreational-oriented task was measured with 3 items (e.g. free playtime, $\alpha_{\text{actual}}=.63$, $\alpha_{\text{ideal}}=.62$). For this scale the calculated Cronbach Alpha coefficient of reliability is above .60 indicating insufficient reliability. Results regarding this scale are viewed with appropriate caution.

Homework support is measured by one item.

For each of the three task areas, the current implementation quality and its significance in the ideal state were assessed. Both aspects were measured using a four-point rating scale, with higher values being associated with higher implementation quality respectively higher importance.

Results

Research Question 1: EEO Cooperation, Task Performance and Job Satisfaction

Three, one-way-between-groups analyses of variance with subsequent planned contrasts were conducted among leaders and staff, respectively, to explore the impact of the two different domains in primary schools on EEO cooperation, task performance and job satisfaction. Three contrasts were defined: one to test whether the EEO staff members' assessments are different from those of the teaching staff; and one each to see whether there are differences between EEO and teaching staff on the leadership and staff levels, respectively. The homogeneity-of-variances requirement was checked and if violated, the more robust Welch F-test was used. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

	EEO				Teaching	
	staff		directors		staff	
Scale	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Cooperation	4.31	0.91	4.25	0.70	5.06	0.82
Task Performance EEO	5.13	0.71	5.06	0.60	5.29	0.79
Job satisfaction	5.12	0.88	5.04	0.74	5.05	0.94

There is a statistically significant difference for cooperation (*Welch's F*(3, 169.662)=38.29, $p<.001$). Planned contrasts indicate that the mean score for cooperation is significantly lower for the domain EEO compared to the teaching domain ($t(215.014)=9.15$, $p<.001$, $d=1.71$, large effect) and that this finding is present on the leadership level ($t(116.71)=5.04$, $p<.001$, $d=0.80$, large effect) as well as on the staff level ($t(405.896)=9.23$, $p<.001$, $d=0.91$, large effect).

Furthermore, there is a statistically significant difference for EEO task performance (*Welch's F*(3, 177.214)=.04, $p=.031$). Planned contrasts indicate that the mean score for EEO task performance is significantly lower for the EEO domain compared to the teaching domain ($t(479.406)=2.32$, $p=.02$, $d=0.22$, small effect) and that this finding is present on the staff level ($t(122.643)=3.18$, $p=.002$, $d=0.47$, small to medium effect). However, it is noticeable that there are no significant differences in the assessment at the leadership level ($t(116.867)=1.71$, $p=.09$, $d=0.27$, small effect).

Finally, there is a statistically significant difference for job satisfaction (*Welch's F*(3, 182.158)=5.60, $p=.001$, small effect). Planned contrasts indicate that the mean score for job satisfaction is significantly lower for the EEO domain compared to the teaching domain ($t(223.578)=2.22$, $p=.027$, $d=0.38$, small effect) and that this finding is present on the leadership level ($t(122.643)=3.18$, $p=.002$, $d=0.47$, small effect). However, it is noticeable that there are no significant differences in the assessment at the staff level ($t(457.314)=-0.94$, $p=.348$, $d=-0.09$, negligible effect).

Research Question 2: Tasks of EEO

Table 3 shows that for the three different tasks the difference between the actual state and the ideal is significant. Actual state refers to the degree to which the EEO are currently fulfilling the given tasks in their job. Ideal refers to the degree to which they would like to fulfil this task.

Table 3. Tasks – Actual State and Ideal: Paired Sample Statistics

	Actual State			Ideal		
	N	M	SD	N	Mean	SD
social competencies oriented task	246	3.26	0.42	247	3.76	0.31
recreational oriented task	246	3.37	0.48	247	3.68	0.37
Homework Support	246	3.28	0.68	245	3.11	0.76

The EEO staff want significantly more social-competencies oriented and recreational-oriented tasks as well as significantly less responsibility regarding homework support than they currently have.

Research Question 3: Correlation

The Pearson Product-Moment Correlations are presented in Table 4. It was found that the correlation between cooperation and task performance is significantly lower for EEO staff than for teachers ($z=-6.26$, $p<.001$), while the correlation between cooperation and job satisfaction is significantly higher for EEO staff ($z=3.40$, $p<.001$).

Table 4. Pearson Product-Moment Correlations between Cooperation and Task Accomplishment on the part of EEO as well as Job Satisfaction

		Task Accomplishment on the part of EEO	Job Satisfaction
Cooperation	Total	.60***	.42***
	N=512		
	EEO	.43***	.57***
	N= 243		
	Teaching staff	.77***	.33***
	N=274		

Note. *** $p<.001$ (two-tailed)

Discussion

This paper is focused on the multi-professional cooperation between the domains of teaching and EEO. On the one hand, a comparison of the subjective quality of cooperation, task performance and of job satisfaction was made, at both management and staff levels, between the domains of teaching and EEO. In addition, the perspective of the EEO staff regarding their individual areas of responsibility was examined more closely. Finally, the correlates of the quality of cooperation were investigated.

The results show that the cooperation between the domains of teaching and EEO is rated generally as good but significantly worse by the EEO than by teachers and school leaders. The reasons for this different view on cooperation may lie in the structural setup. The school leader is the EEO leader's organizational superior, which represents a hierarchical gradient that is also transferred to the cooperation between the staff (Bucher & Näpfl, 2019). Supporting this thesis, empirical findings showed that EEO staff report a lack of appreciation for their work and that their tasks are hierarchically classified (Boehm-Kasper et al., 2016; Schuler et al., 2019). Furthermore, there are different degrees of willingness to cooperate (Bloechliger & Bauer, 2016): the EEO staff are more willing than the teaching staff to cooperate, which is also a possible explanation for the difference in the rating of the quality of cooperation. Teachers may be less demanding as far as cooperation is concerned and therefore more easily satisfied.

The task performance of EEO staff is rated significantly worse by the EEO staff themselves than by the teachers. It is noticeable that there are no significant differences in this assessment at the leadership level, which could be explained by the fact that school leaders have more cooperation channels than the staff.

The results show that job satisfaction is rated significantly worse by the EEO leader's than by the school leaders. As cooperation is one of the factors most closely related to job satisfaction (Toropova et al., 2021, p.71), this result may also be due to the structural design of the cooperation, which is accompanied by varying degrees of autonomy. Since the school leaders is at the same time cooperation partner and supervisor of the EEO leader's, the latter is not on an equal footing with the school leaders.

Teachers view the quality of cooperation and task performance by EEO staff as more closely related than do EEO staff. The subjective quality of cooperation and task performance by the EEO staff is more closely related for teachers than for the EEO staff. This result might be explained by the fact that the tasks of the EEO are perceived differently. The EEO currently carry out more academically-oriented tasks and fewer recreational and social competencies-oriented tasks than they would ideally like to. But it is the academically-oriented tasks that lead to a direct and immediately apparent workload relief for the teaching staff – which can be seen as a benefit of cooperation. Currently, EEO are performing tasks that they would see as less within their purview, but which have direct positive effects for teachers. That is in line with Boehm-Kasper et al. (2016) who found that teachers but not the EEO perceived cooperation as a potential workload relief. There is already a close link between the teaching staff and EEO in the canton, but there is also potential for improvement in terms of clarifying tasks and defining areas of cooperation so that the cooperation is beneficial for all. Here, there are currently still diverging perceptions of the roles of the EEOs and the teachers, which currently affect subjective perceptions of cooperation, especially by the EEOs. This is of particular importance because the relationship between cooperation and job satisfaction is stronger

among EEO staff than for teachers. This may be an indicator of the greater importance that EEO staff place on cooperation. Also incorporating other research findings (Niehoff et al., 2014), we suggest that EEO staff want to work more closely with teachers, while teachers are more cautious about the outcome of working with EEO staff. According to the social exchange theory the EEO staff sees more benefits in the cooperation – as their work would be more valued. In comparison, teachers fear that cooperation costs more time than it brings benefits (Niehoff, et al., 2014) and “expect the other professionals to adjust and to fit into the scholarly system” (Schuler et al., 2019, p. 93). Here, specific interventions seem to be indicated to bring about necessary changes in attitudes (Valentin et al., 2019) and to realize a winning multi-professional cooperation, as it is already described hypothetically (Jutzi et al., 2016; Jutzi & Woodland, 2019; Gaiser et al., 2016; Maag Merki, 2015; Näpfli & Strittmatter, 2021; Schuler et al., 2019), also in practice.

Limitations and Future Research

It is important that the limitations of the current study are understood. The data stems from a canton that offers a specific form of EEO. The question that arises is to what extent the form of EEO influences the results and thus to what extent the results can be transferred to other forms of all-day schooling. The data was collected in the years 2018 and 2019 and so before COVID-19, which changed a lot for the work of EEO (e.g. group compositions or active engagement). This could affect the perception of extended education.

All data were collected via self-reports which can lead to higher correlations because of the common method variance – so future research should examine the reported links using a multi-method approach.

Regarding the cooperation between the EEO and the teaching domain, we could formulate several assumptions depending on the form of EEO: where the school is the provider of the EEO, the implementation of multi-professional cooperation should be easier to organize and thus more extensive. Further, it can be assumed that where EEO are compulsory, more areas of cooperation can arise since tasks can be more easily transferred from the school to EEO than if they are non-compulsory. Further research in this field should look at the different forms of EEO.

This paper is a first attempt to capture the individual attitudes toward the multi-professional cooperation between teachers and the EEO staff. But the EEO staff belong to a certain school. This may result in EEO staff from the same school being more similar than EEO staff from different schools (nested data). Future research should also examine the schools influences by conducting a multi-level approach.

Conclusions

A perceived higher quality of cooperation is linked with a higher level of job satisfaction for both cooperation partners: benefits seem to outweigh the costs associated with increased cooperation. Possible benefits to teachers may include a reduction in workload that comes from cooperating with EEO when they can transfer some of the work to them. The EEO staff

may feel more appreciated for their work. Cooperation between EEO and teaching staff seems to be important as satisfied staff have a higher commitment to remain in post, from which the children also benefit (Bloechliger & Bauer, 2016). For a successful cooperation it is essential that the tasks and goals are clear for the cooperation partners which till now is not so as EEO staff is feeling misunderstood as teachers expect them to adjust and fit into the school system (Schuler et al., 2019, p. 93).

Considering the increasing number of children in EEO and the constantly growing demands on teachers, the cooperation should be explored further. If the two domains are connected more closely, there will also be new opportunities for EEO staff to take on new tasks. But the defining of new tasks or the transfer of tasks from teachers to EEO is problematic as long as EEO are non-compulsory.

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