"Why do I do what I do?" The meaning of work from the perspective of social pedagogues as informal leaders in all-day schools

Andrea Scholian[1]*, Christa Kappler[2], Renate Stohler[1] and Patricia Schuler Braunschweig[2]

[1]School of Social Work, Institute of Childhood, Youth and Family, Zurich University of Applied Sciences, Zürich, Switzerland, [2]Centre for Teaching Professions and Continuing Professional Development, Zurich University of Teacher Education, Zurich, Switzerland

The number of all-day schools in Switzerland is growing fast. However, the development of new guidelines and regulations in this field is lagging. In their unique position, the professionals not only execute but also define and lead educational practices in all-day schools. In the present study, problem-based group interviews were conducted with extended educational staff in schools in urban Switzerland to review their educational practices and to uncover the meaning they ascribe to their work. The interviews provided insights into professional beliefs and attitudes and were analyzed using thematic analysis. The data revealed two areas of tension in which social pedagogues operate: on the one hand between "fulfilling individual needs and serving a large number of children" and on the other hand between "providing spaces for experience and building trusting and close relationships with children." Different ways of shaping the work can be determined, depending on the professional background and qualification of the staff. In the future, it is essential to make the work of staff in all-day schools visible and to highlight the challenges in dealing with different demands in the hope that a coherent attitude toward their work will emerge.

KEYWORDS

all-day school, educational practice, educational policy, non-formal learning, informal learning, informal leadership, school-based extended education

1 Introduction and research question

Extended education provides a range of services outside the regular school hours that vary in form, purpose, and ownership. It includes private tutoring, cram schools, all-day schools, before and after-school programs, and youth development programs (Bae, 2020). Compared to more traditional educational settings like schools and early childhood education, research knowledge about this diverse field is scarce.

In Switzerland, institutionalized, non-compulsory extended educational services at public schools are known as "Tagesstrukturen" (daytime structures), and schools providing these services are called "Tagesschulen" (all-day schools) (EDK, 2022). Public schools, mostly in urban areas, offer such services before and after lessons and during lunchtime. The staff has a diverse professional background, ranging from unqualified childminders to university-trained social pedagogues. The number of all-day schools has risen sharply in the last 15 years, particularly in urban areas (Federal Statistical Office, 2020). In the city of Zurich, for example,

in 2008, 28% of pupils were integrated into this structure, and by 2023, this figure had risen to 65% (Department of School and Sport City of Zurich, Switzerland, 2012a,b).

The first institutionalized, non-compulsory extended educational services for schoolchildren ("Kinderhort") opened in Switzerland at the end of the 19th century as a junction between family and school. It was their task to complement both family and school. At the beginning of the 20th century, this focus shifted toward a primarily caring character and complementary family tasks (Staub, 2021). The expansion of all-day schools was intensified and became politically acceptable to the majority at the end of the 20th century. The reasons for advocating an expansion were manifold, such as the decline in births (Crotti, 2015; Schüpbach and Herzog, 2009), increased shortages in the labor market (Criblez and Manz, 2011), with gender equality anchored in law since 1981 and the Gender Equality Act, which came into force in 1996 (Criblez and Manz, 2011; Crotti, 2015). In short, the introduction of all-day schools is warranted by the equality of men and women, economic and socio-political reasons, and preventive goals.

In addition, due to Swiss federalism, there are no defined mandates or binding guidelines at a national level (e.g., a curriculum). Switzerland also does not have a specific training program for the staff in all-day schools. The municipalities are responsible for the organization and structure of these services, resulting in a great variety of framework conditions and performance (Department of Education, Canton of Zurich, 2021, p. 12). Thus, individual schools mainly develop a service that suits their local needs.

Unsurprisingly, professionals in all-day schools deal with various complex tasks, divergent goals, and different expectations. These include designing spaces and structures for playing, planning activities and excursions, balancing children's freedom with the need for intervention, and managing educational policies such as the staff-child ratio, the division of shared spaces at school, and the shortage of qualified staff (Department of Education, Canton of Zurich, 2021).

In their unique position, the professionals do not only execute but also define and lead educational practices in all-day schools. They shape educational offerings and create content, space, and interaction for and with the children based on their professional or individual understanding. Meanwhile, their practice also defines the purpose of these programs in all-day schools, which take place before and after school lessons. This underscores their significant influence and power in shaping the educational landscape. Since staff in German-speaking Switzerland shape and organize their work without a basis of binding guidelines, the following research question is of great interest: What meaning do staff members ascribe to their work in all-day schools?

2 State of research

With the continuing expansion of all-day schools in Switzerland, research efforts on this topic have intensified in recent years. There is a particular focus on the cooperation between the two professions, the teachers and the social pedagogues in all-day schools. The collaboration of the professionals seems to be inhibited by structural issues, but mainly cultural ones, as the professionals do not collaborate but rather organize their work alongside each other on parallel tracks (Chiapparini et al., 2018; Chiapparini and Scholian, 2023; Schuler Braunschweig and Kappler, 2023). A recent study also revealed that

cooperation is shaped differently depending on the orientation of the social pedagogues in an all-day school. Some try to support teachers or take on tasks assigned to them by the teachers. However, they consider the cooperation with the parents as a challenge and thus sometimes feel powerless. Other social pedagogues give more weight to their professional content or individual preferences and only respond to the expectations and demands of teachers and parents if they think they are legitimate (Scholian, 2025).

There are also many studies on the quality of all-day schools in terms of effectiveness (e.g., Von Allmen et al., 2018) which revealed that attendance at all-day schools did not have a positive impact on the students' academic output. Further studies on children in all-day schools indicated the presence of well-being spaces for children (e.g., Schuler Braunschweig, 2023; Wetzel and Näpfli, 2022). An evaluation of the work environment in all-day schools concluded that employees are motivated and perceive their work as meaningful (Windlinger, 2020). However, they also experience frustration in some cases, particularly when they cannot meet the needs of all children due to the large group size or a lack of resources. The noise level, and insufficient staff space and children's retreat areas were also criticized. Concerning quality requirements, Windlinger (2020) states that staff without training have lower expectations in terms of training compared to trained staff. At the same time, the study also showed that many employees have precarious working conditions. They often are employed on hourly wages, at low workloads, and without training (ibid.).

Research outside Switzerland reveals further insights into work in all-day schools or extended education. German professionals see their role as complementary to the families, by compensating for educational deficits, equalizing for deficits with educational programs, and a motivating learning environment. Others see their role in offering a "caring, supportive counter-world that is—apparently or actually—denied to them [the children] in the family" (Idel et al., 2013, p. 256). In another study on cooperation, Silkenbeumer et al. (2017) concluded that, compared to teachers, it is difficult to find "unique selling points" for social pedagogues who work in schools. In Denmark, Moloney and Pope (2020) identified an additional field of tension concerning work in all-day schools –named Skolefritidsordning [SFO] in Denmark: enabling leisure and recreation while encouraging leadership and responsibility. They claim that the focus has shifted from leisure and recreation to promoting academic achievement and accountability. Sweden has a curriculum for employees in extended education—called School-age Educare in Sweden. The institutions serve to compensate for "children's different backgrounds, where children can follow their interests and needs "and, meanwhile, "complement […] the family "(Lager and Gustafsson-Nyckel, 2021, p. 7).

3 Theoretical framework

The present contribution assumes that the organization of everyday life in all-day schools is the product of a process of sensemaking (Weick et al., 2005) among staff, guided by different goals of their work, different needs, and expectations of children, parents, and society. The diversity of staff members regarding their disciplines and qualifications adds to the vast array of pedagogical practices. The sensemaking theory is a suitable framework for

understanding how individuals and organizations interpret and act upon information in complex and ambiguous situations. The concept is about a "retrospective development of plausible images that rationalize what people are doing" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 409). The term sensemaking is used "when a flow of organizational circumstances is turned into words and salient categories," the organization is embodied in "organizing itself […] in written and spoken texts" and when talking about it shapes behavior (Weick et al., 2005).

The sensemaking concept comprises various characteristics and follows a process. The starting point of sensemaking is "chaos" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 411). It is about noticing this and then labeling and categorizing [the chaos] to stabilize the streaming of experience (Weick et al., 2005). To create meaning, the abstract relates to the concrete. Various social factors influence this process. Sensemaking takes place in communication and is "an ongoing process of making sense of the circumstances in which people collectively find [themselves] […] and of the events that affect them" (Taylor and Van Every, 2000, p. 58). Consequently, sensemaking is used to deal with uncertainties. It is not about whether something is right or wrong but about explaining activities to understand them. The "description is important mostly because it sustains motivation" (Weick et al., 2005, p. 415). The focus is on plausibility and the interpretation of actions (ibid., p. 409). Sensemaking is about constructing frameworks that make actions comprehensible and manageable. When staff members of an organization are confronted with ambiguity and different approaches, they search for meanings and settle on a point of view. Weick et al. (2005) assume that these convictions are reflected in actions and routines in the organizations. Sensemaking theory is also described as a means by which action can change institutions and the environment (p. 419).

This study aims to unfold the sensemaking process of the staff in all-day schools. Due to the absence of steering documents and explicit goals, it is assumed that the staff must act and perform, define routines, and ascertain their sense of work while facing uncertainties.

4 Materials and methods

The data originates from an international three-year research collaboration: The project "To Make the Invisible Visible" (TIV) aims to provide an understanding of educational practice in extended educational services at schools in three countries—Australia, Sweden, and Switzerland. In the Swiss study, a case study was chosen as the research design. Therefore, group interviews ($N = 4$, including 15 persons) were conducted with staff members (qualified and non-qualified) in two all-day schools in urban Switzerland to determine what sense they ascribe to their work. The research team asked the staff members to participate in the study via the school principal. All interviewees volunteered to participate in the interview and signed a declaration of consent. The interviews were conducted on school premises, audio-recorded and transcribed, and lasted approximately 1 h. The professional background of the participants is the following: Three persons are social pedagogues with a tertiary education degree; one person is in education at the tertiary level; four persons hold a vocational qualification in childcare; three persons are assistants and do not have a pedagogical education; four persons perform their civilian service (one option within the mandatory military service for young men in Switzerland).

The guidelines for the group interviews were based on the problem-centered interview (Witzel, 2000). They included a request at the beginning to briefly characterize the all-day school and its various features, such as area, location, age group, or daily routines. The questions were about what the staff members find crucial when looking after the children, and about how they perceive the spatial environment and the time phases within a day. Other questions were about whether they plan the daily offers or spontaneously react to the situation and whether there are principles or concepts on which they base their work. Finally, the staff members were asked whether and how all-day school settings have changed in the time they have been working in the field, how they define a "super professional in all-day school," and what challenges they see in their everyday work—always with the request to describe specific situations.

The interviews provided insights into professional beliefs and attitudes and were analyzed using systematic thematic analysis. Following Braun and Clarke (2022) we proceeded in six steps for this structured, sequential approach to interpreting research data: (1) data familiarization; (2) generating initial codes; (3) searching for themes; (4) reviewing themes; (5) defining and naming themes; (6) producing the report. To ensure an intersubjective validation, the first and sixth steps were carried out in groups of four researchers, while one researcher conducted steps two to five.

5 Results

In the following, the relevant topics that emerged in the analysis process are presented and classified with the help of the concept of sensemaking. Considering this concept, the rising numbers of all-day schools with more children without binding policy guidelines are viewed analytically as the moment of "chaos." The framework conditions in all-day schools in cities were often different in the past: There were smaller, mixed-age, and consistent groups of children who were looked after by people trained in social pedagogy. The expansion of all-day schools resulted in adjustments to the pedagogical concepts at various levels and, therefore, also affected the work of the staff referring to this development process in the interviews. As a result of these developments, staff seem to be forced to rethink their work and their associated role. They must review their opportunities and justify their work. At the same time, they are confronted with different requirements, must deal with uncertainties, and settle for a point of view.

5.1 Making sure that the children feel comfortable is an overarching professional task

Despite the changes in the job field in all-day schools and the different senses they see in their work, all staff interviewed want to ensure that the children feel comfortable and perceive this as their overriding task. This means accompanying and supporting the children and responding to their needs. Children should be encouraged to organize their time independently and according to their needs.

Most of the staff feel that they operate in a field of tension. In the interviews, we found different patterns of how staff members deal with two specific areas of tension:

- Fulfilling individual needs and serving many children.
- Providing spaces for experience and building trusting and close relationships with children

5.2 Fulfilling individual needs and serving many children

The staff is torn between the necessity to concentrate on group dynamics, to offer a suitable place for everyone, and to focus on the individual. How employees deal with this area of tension differs from one another.

One pattern that emerges from the data on the field of tension is that various staff members see the development as contradictory to their function given the large group they must supervise.

It is important to me that I have time to respond to the children's needs, which is no longer possible now, I would like to have time for various things [...]. If they [the children] start a project, I would like to support them, which is impossible due to a lack of resources. (A, q. P3).

Three professionals repeatedly refer to the change that has taken place resulting from the increased attendance of children in all-day schools by differentiating between now and the past. The discrepancy between the situation "in the past," and how one would like it to be now often leads to complaints about the current situation and results in professional dissatisfaction.

The rapid growth of the team, and high fluctuation rates, we used to be one team, but now we are separated from each other, with many children, with a complete separation of the large groups of children. (A, q. P1).

This person (P1) repeatedly uses the situation from a few years ago as a point of reference, when all-day schools were more family-based, with smaller and mixed-age groups of children who ate lunch together at one table, and one staff member was responsible for the same children for several years. Due to the expansion of all-day schooling and the resulting rise in the number of children, the children are increasingly looked after in age-homogeneous groups (per level) and eat in an "open restaurant." A staff member does not always supervise the same child over several years.

This has led to a change in the purpose of their work, which person P1 describes as follows.

I would like to accompany them and enable them to have a nice day, to come to rest, to have a place to be, to play, to find out what they would actually like to do, to find out who they are, what they would like to delve into. I would like to give them opportunities to participate as much as possible. The small concerns get lost, and a lot of children just tag along. And then our attention is drawn to the children who act up. (A, q., P1).

Some staff members reject new developments since they are incompatible with the meaning they assign to their work, as mentioned above. For other staff members, the developments are consistent with their meaning of work. One professional emphasizes

the negative aspects of the previous family-based form of work and describes the job today as more professional, as can be seen in the following quote:

We started small. There were far fewer children and adults. It was much more informal, but now, we work much more professionally. Now, we also get a lot of input from other professionals and can give them observation assignments for individual children. It is also enriching for the children; they now interact much more with each other outside of the group. (E, q. P4).

Professionalism is also reflected in weekly meetings and regular multiprofessional dialogue, which leads to adjustments and further developments. The constant documentation of everyday life in all-day school and staff members assigned to a child is a means of professionalization. The staff members are organized into sub-groups and schedule regular exchange meetings.

At the same time, another person points out a benefit of the new development: Children can shape their relationships with staff in a self-determined way in everyday life.

These relationships have changed. I think this is also positive because now the child can see which person suits them and with whom they can build a relationship[...]. (A, q. P1).

5.3 Providing space for experience and building trusting and close relationships with children

Data on the purpose of the work showed two central issues, namely the need to provide children with spaces for experience and to build trusting and close relationships with children.

Staff members see their job as providing children with spaces to experience various activities and play together. One or more staff members are responsible for one room during several hours or the whole day. Based on the children's needs, the staff organize activities and design the rooms accordingly.

The library is kept open to serve as a retreat for children who need quiet. We also set up activity zones so that the children can pursue their needs, e.g., creativity, free play, construction, exercise, and rest/relaxation; different spaces are important for the children, and we provide different activities. Concept: free roaming in the activity zones according to the children's needs. (E, q, P3).

Although the staff organize various activities for the children during the day, they remain flexible. This means, for example, that planned activities are rearranged or not carried out if the children express other needs.

For example, if we plan an activity and go outside with the children, I do not insist that the children do precisely what we had planned. If they have other ideas or needs, that's ok, and I take up the children's input on what they want to do. (E, q., P2).

Some staff mention that, depending on which area they are responsible for, they do not see all the children during their work.

They consider themselves replaceable and interchangeable because the quality of their relationship quality does not depend on them but on their (shared) understanding of their profession. Instead, they see themselves in the role of being present and accessible at various locations. Children decide which area they choose, with whom they play, and which staff they interact with. However, staff will intervene if they think the child's choice of a game or playmate is not appropriate.

In contrast, staff members who reclaim the traditional model characterize socio-educational work as building trusting and close relationships with each child. Educational work is carried out through relationship-oriented work, which is highly individual; therefore, people are not interchangeable. Staff members become the children's confidants and act proactively when conflicts arise. Because they know the children, they are aware of conflicts that can arise between children. Two professionals criticize a lack of clarity regarding their professional role and proclaim a lack of pedagogical orientation. Their mission is unclear, and they are not (or cannot be) guided by any socio-pedagogical concept.

In addition to relationship-oriented work, six staff members define their work as being determined by seasons, topics, or projects: for example, making seasonal window decorations, celebrating Halloween, building huts in the playground, rehearsing for a play, or organizing handicrafts. These activities are partly initiated by the children and implemented in collaboration with the staff. They consider it their task to turn children's initiatives into project work.

> *Building a hut on the school grounds was a socio-educational project that was very open - the children took it up from holiday care and then we continued to support it, and we added a second season. (A, q. P3).*

5.4 The meaning of work depending on professional background, qualifications, and position

The interviews showed that the function that staff ascribe to themselves in all-day schools depends significantly on their background, qualifications, and professional position in the school setting. The socio-pedagogically qualified professionals refer to socio-pedagogical goals, which represent their meaning of work (e.g., participation, children's needs, accompanying conflicts), and five of them describe the promotion of self and social skills as their goal. However, all the trained professionals are not very specific about how they implement these goals and principles. They describe a wide range of tasks and see the complexity of their actions in numerous dilemmas or strongly context-dependent interventions, which characterize their work.

In addition, two professionals emphasize that their task changes depending on the day or time of day. If there are fewer children present, or if children are supervised for a longer period of time, they can spend more time with one child or a group of children. This can be seen, for example, in the following statement:

> *There are three days that I find strenuous, that's when the children are very demanding. There are two days when I can catch my breath, when I have time to work on projects. (A, q., P1).*

Staff members without socio-pedagogical training or qualifications do not justify the meaning of their work with socio-pedagogical principles, unlike qualified staff members. Three staff members without socio-pedagogical training, being primarily responsible for preparing and serving meals, describe their role as taking on educational work with precise tasks. They have a clearly defined function, such as making sure that children eat a healthy and balanced diet, "communicate respectfully" at the table, use "forms of politeness" (saying please and thank you), have "table manners" or appropriate "table culture."

> *There was also a situation where a boy said he would only eat vegetables if his dad cooked them. I was then able to motivate him to taste the vegetables, and he was so proud of having tried. He did not quite like them, but I told him it was great that he had tasted them anyway. (A, n. q., P3).*

These educational tasks can be implemented at work, and the success is easy to measure. Unlike people with pedagogical qualifications, these staff members consider their work as clearly definable; they react primarily within their professional remit and develop their strategies.

All female staff members who are not pedagogically trained are guided by their experiences or ideas as mothers, as shown in the following quote: "We are all mothers, and we have our ideas and experiences to contribute."

In contrast, the unqualified young men in civilian service, who only work in all-day schools for a limited time, highlight a clear distinction between their work and school teaching. This means that there is no lesson plan like at school. Instead, they must always act based on the situation. Two community service workers emphasize that childcare work should not focus on behavioral norms but should give the children more freedom. This attitude coincides with the clear distinction they make between extended education services and school lessons in all-day schools. The purpose of school is learning and working. Childcare is leisure time, and for them as staff, it is a work of trust.

Two pedagogically unqualified community workers see their function more as teaching the children everyday things, such as "life," "making friends," and "not just moving within classic normative boundaries." One describes the work so that every day is different and depends on the group dynamics. To be able to deal with these group dynamics and the situations experienced, it is essential to work on a trusting relationship.

In contrast to the unqualified female staff members who refer to their role as mothers, the community workers put more emphasis on "self-evident" values, which can also be individual, as a point of reference for their actions.

6 Discussion

The number of all-day schools in Switzerland is growing fast. However, the development of new guidelines and regulations in this field is lagging. The increasing number of children calls for a redesign of educational activities and space in some all-day schools and, therefore, partly also changes in the meaning of work. In addition, there are various goals associated with the expansion that the

employees should fulfill. These goals are often contradictory, such as enabling parents (still often mothers) to work while at the same time doing preventative work (Criblez and Manz, 2011). Consequently, some staff see different purposes in their practice work. With their peers, they create routines on which they can rely, eventually shaping the culture in all-day schools and defining a sense of their work. This is reflected in the different areas of tension we found in this study.

Previous research confirms most of our findings. Available studies also revealed various fields of tension, such as the frustration of being unable to meet the needs of all the children (e.g., Windlinger, 2020; Moloney and Pope, 2020). In the areas of tension in our study, the staff in all-day schools attributed new and various meanings to their constantly changing work to reach a consensus between their conception of work and the practice. Further, the results confirm the findings of a Swiss study, which shows that the orientation of social pedagogues is individually defined and focused on different things, depending on the team (Scholian, 2025). This leads to diversity in how the work is organized by the individual employees and what meaning they see in their work.

However, there are also differences to previous study results. In contrast to research results from other countries with a higher degree of professionalization in the field, such as Sweden or Denmark, the data material shows hardly any attribution of a function to performance or the compensation of deficits in the family (Lager and Gustafsson-Nyckel, 2021; Moloney and Pope, 2020). It remains to be seen whether these aspects will become more vital with the further development of all-day schools. In the present study, only unqualified staff members spoke about compensation for deficits in the family by referring to their role as "mothers" and adding the teaching of table manners to their job tasks. This task is easier to perform, whereas other tasks are more complex and more difficult to describe in concrete terms. Such actions are often situation-related and depend on the staff (qualifications) and the group dynamics.

The results also show how work in the all-day school has changed. It shifted from a place that was supposed to replace families to an environment where children are agents of their leisure time. They can, for example, decide when they want to eat and with whom they wish to interact. However, there might be fewer opportunities for social pedagogues to interact closely with children and to meet their individual needs, which is an aspect that is regretted by some professionals and is seen as a loss of quality.

Lunch is often also mentioned in the interviews as a sensitive topic in all-day schools in Switzerland, because school lunches are still not the norm, especially in rural areas (Crotti, 2015; Federal Statistical Office, 2020). In no other country—except the Netherlands –, do women work as much part-time as in Switzerland (Crotti, 2015). Thus, they are responsible for providing lunch at home between morning and afternoon lessons. This is another indication that all-day schools, in the sense of institutionalized, non-compulsory extended educational services at public schools, are still young in their development in Switzerland.

Nevertheless, the social pedagogues keep the new business running, and some state that they no longer meet their professional expectations. They do their job within the framework conditions and resources defined by the municipality so that parents can combine family and career. However, they can only partially perform preventive tasks or fulfill the needs of the children. Only on certain days or at specific times of day when there are fewer children on site do they have the opportunity to interact closely with individual children, as mentioned in the interviews. Under these conditions, it is essential to constantly check how comfortable the children feel in the all-day school.

The interviews also revealed different patterns depending on the educational level and qualifications of the staff members. This means that the mix of trained and untrained staff contributes to the diversity of meaning ascribed to the work. Qualified staff refer to socio-pedagogical principles but rarely make explicit links to examples where they are established.

This leads to a higher need for professional intervention and negotiation and a broader societal understanding of the potential of all-day schools and, associated with it, the work of social pedagogues. Today, there are limits to the professionalization of staff, especially in all-day schools, due to the precarious working conditions. Nevertheless, most staff are motivated and see their work as meaningful, as an earlier study shows (Windlinger, 2020). However, there exist no binding pedagogical standards or educational policies that preserve a clear professional identity for those working in these institutions (EDK, 2022; Windlinger, 2020). In addition, it is difficult to clearly define unique selling points for social pedagogues in schools to show what added value the employees provide (Silkenbeumer et al., 2017). Therefore, the definition of the aim and purpose of all-day schools is left to the various stakeholders and their perspectives. In this ambiguous or undefined area, the pedagogical mission and its implementation become highly variable.

At present, it can be assumed that the care for and work with children in all-day schools depends on how the individual staff members define their work. If a function of their work is supported by other staff members, the school management, the authorities, and the parents, it seems suitable. So, it is vital to establish nationwide principles for social pedagogues working in the school sector – such as those that exist in Switzerland for youth work (Swiss Umbrella Association for Socio-Cultural Animation in Child and Youth Work - Fundamentals for Decision-Makers and Experts, 2018) or school social work (Avenir Social and School social Workers Association, 2025) or a curriculum like in Sweden (Lager and Gustafsson-Nyckel, 2021). This creates a quality standard for social pedagogues in all-day schools and the children who attend them. The care of the children would, therefore, be—at least less—dependent on the staff members. It would also provide a basis for standardized further training. Standardized further training is necessary so that social pedagogues become aware of the areas of tension, can deal with them, and can legitimize the quality they can provide.

Finally, it is crucial to make the work of staff in all-day schools visible and to highlight the challenges in dealing with different demands, hoping that a coherent attitude toward their work will emerge in the future. The study revealed important insights into the pedagogical work in all-day schools from the employees' perspective. Since this is a qualitative study of two selected schools in German-speaking Switzerland, the results cannot be generalized. However, this article aims to contribute to making the work visible and show challenges in the field. Further studies need to continue investigating the expansion of all-day schools and the impact on the work of social pedagogues. More schools need to be examined, including those in rural areas. The children's perspective must also be taken into account with the aim of gaining a more differentiated insight into the work,

investigate possible ways of dealing with the areas of tension, and demonstrate the quality achieved in day schools. At the same time, a basis for further training of social pedagogues can be created.

Data availability statement

The datasets presented in this article are not readily available because the data are not publicly available due to the ethical guidelines of the project. Requests to access the datasets should be directed to Andrea Scholian, scod@zhaw.ch.

Ethics statement

Written informed consent was obtained from the individual(s) for the publication of any potentially identifiable images or data included in this article.

Author contributions

AS: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. CK: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. RS: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. PS: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Generative AI statement

The authors declare that no Gen AI was used in the creation of this manuscript.

Publisher's note

All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers. Any product that may be evaluated in this article, or claim that may be made by its manufacturer, is not guaranteed or endorsed by the publisher.

References

Avenir Social and School social Workers Association. (2025). Leitbild Soziale Arbeit in der Schule. [Guiding principles of social work in schools] Available online at: https://avenirsocial.ch/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/AS_DE_Schulsozarbeit_160329.pdf (Accessed March 15, 2025).

Bae, S. H. (2020). "Concepts, models, and research of extended education" in International developments in research on extended education: perspectives on extracurricular activities, after-school programmes, and all-day schools. eds. S. H. Bae, J. L. Mahoney, S. Maschke and L. Stecher (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich), 11–26.

Braun, V., and Clarke, V. (2022). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qual. Res. Psychol.* 3, 77–101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Chiapparini, E., Kappler, C., and Schuler Braunschweig, P. (2018). ""Die Wissen gar nicht, was wir alles machen." Befunde zu multiprofessioneller Kooperation im Zuge der Einführung von Tagesschulen in der Stadt Zürich [They don't know what we do: findings on multiprofessional cooperation while implementing all-day schools in the city of Zurich]" in Soziale Arbeit im Kontext Schule. Aktuelle Entwicklungen in Praxis und Forschung in der Schweiz. eds. E. Chiapparini, R. Stohler and E. Bussmann (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich), 48–60.

Chiapparini, E., and Scholian, A. (2023). ""Ein noch stärker auszuschöpfendes Potenzial!": umfassende Bildung durch die Zusammenarbeit von Lehrpersonen und Fachpersonen Betreuung an Tagesschulen – die Sicht der sozialpädagogischen Fachpersonen [Potential to be increased: comprehensive education by collaboration between teachers and professionals in all-day schools – the social pedagogues' view]" in Tagesschulen im Fokus: Akteur*innen – Kontexte – Perspektiven. eds. P. Schuler Braunschweig and C. Kappler (Bern: Hep), 34–46.

Criblez, L., and Manz, K. (2011). "Neue' Familienpolitik in der Schweiz – für die Familie, für die frauen – oder für die Wirtschaft? [New family politics in Switzerland – for the family, for the women – or for the economy?]" in Ungleiche Geschlechtergleichheit. Geschlechterpolitik und Theorien des Humankapitals. eds. R. Casale and E. Forster (Opladen: Verlag Barbara Budrich), 113–130.

Crotti, C. (2015). "Von der Teilzeit- zur Ganztagsbetreuung? Die Zeitpolitik von Kindergarten, Vor- und Grundschule in der Schweiz [From part-time to all-day school? The time policy of kindergarten, pre-school and primary school in Switzerland]" in Halbtags oder Ganztags?: Zeitpolitiken von Kinderbetreuung und Schule nach 1945 im

europäischen Vergleich. eds. K. Hagemann and K. Jarausch (Weinheim: Beltz Juventa), 371–391.

Department of Education, Canton of Zurich. (2021). Tagesstrukturen, Allgemeine Informationen und spezifische Vorgaben [Daytime structures, general information,specific guidelines]. Available online at: https://www.zh.ch/content/dam/zhweb/bilder-dokumente/themen/bildung/informationen-fuer-schulen/informationen-fuer-die-volksschule/unterrichtsergaenzende-angebote/tagesstrukturen/vsa_broschuere_tagesstrukturen_def_print_digital.pdf (Accessed March 15, 2025).

Department of School and Sport City of Zurich, Switzerland. (2012a). Ennzahlen Schulamt - Stadt Zürich [Key figures School Department - City of Zurich]. Available online at: https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/ssd/de/index/departement_schul_sport/zahlen_fakten/kennzahlen_schulamt.html (Accessed August 9, 2023).

Department of School and Sport City of Zurich, Switzerland. (2012b). Geschäftsbericht 2012, Kennzahlen und Statistische Angaben des Schulamts der Stadt Zürich [Annual Report 2012, Key figures and statistics of the Zurich City School Department]. Available online at: https://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/dam/stzh/ssd/Deutsch/Ueber%20das%20Departement/Weitere%20Dokumente/GB/Kennzahlen%20SAM%20GB%202012.pdf (Accessed August 15, 2014).

EDK. (2022). Tagesstrukturen. Available online at: https://www.edk.ch/de/themen/harmos/tagesstrukturen (Accessed November 21, 2024).

Federal Statistical Office (2020). Familien- und schulergänzende Kinderbetreuung im Jahr 2018 [Supplementary family and school childcare in 2018]. Available online at: https://dam-api.bfs.admin.ch/hub/api/dam/assets/12867117/master (Accessed November 25, 2024).

Idel, T.-S., Reh, S., and Rabenstein, K. (2013). "Transformation der Schule – praxistheoretisch gesehen. Rekonstruktionen am Beispiel von Familiarisierungspraktiken [Transformation of the school - from a practice-theoretical perspective. Reconstructions using the example of familiarisation practices]" in Innovationen im Bildungswesen. eds. M. Rürup and I. Bormann (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien), 249–265.

Lager, K., and Gustafsson-Nyckel, J. (2021). Teachers enacting complementation and compensation in a practice under strain – policy and practice in Swedish school-age EduCare. *IJREE* 9:1. doi: 10.3224/ijree.v9i1.03

Moloney, M., and Pope, M. (2020). Changes and challenges in school-age childcare in Copenhagen. *Int. J. Prim. Element. Early Years Educ.* 48, 76–86. doi: 10.1080/03004279.2019.1575445

Scholian, A. (2025). Qualität an Tagesschulen im Spannungsfeld divergierender Erwartungen und Ansprüche – Eine neo-institutionalistische Perspektive [Quality at day schools in the area of conflicting expectations and demands - a neo-institutionalist perspective]. Weinheim: Beltz Juventa. doi: 10.3262/978-3-7799-8938-7

Schuler Braunschweig, P. (2023). "Wo Kinder sich in Tagesschulen wohl fühlen [Where children feel comfortable in day schools]" in Tagesschulen im Fokus. Akteur*innen – Kontexte – Perspektiven. eds. P. Schuler Braunschweig and C. Kappler (Bern: Hep Verlag), 21–33.

Schuler Braunschweig, P., and Kappler, C. (Eds.) (2023). Tagesschulen im Fokus. Akteur*innen – Kontexte – Perspektiven. [All-day schools in focus. Stakeholders – contexts – perspectives]. Bern: Hep Verlag.

Schüpbach, M., and Herzog, W. (2009). Pädagogische Ansprüche an Tagesschulen [Pedagogical demands on all-day schools]. Tagungsband. Bern: Haupt.

Silkenbeumer, M., Thieme, N., and Kunze, K. (2017). Kooperation in Multiprofessionellen Handlungskontexten. Zur Frage Beruflicher Zuständigkeit/en Sozialer Arbeit [Cooperation in multi-professional action contexts. On the question of professional responsibility in social work]. Neue praxis, Sonderheft 14.

Staub, M. (2021). Betreuung - Erziehung - Bildung die Anfänge der Horte für Schulkinder in der Schweiz, 1880–1930 [Care and education the beginnings of extended education services for schoolchildren in Switzerland, 1880–1930]. Historische Bildungsforschung. *8th* Edn. Zürich: Chronos.

Swiss Umbrella Association for Socio-Cultural Animation in Child and Youth Work - Fundamentals for Decision-Makers and Experts. (2018). Grundlagen für Entscheidungsträger*innen und Fachpersonen. Bern. Available online at: https://doj.ch/wp-content/uploads/Grundlagenbrosch.DOJ_2018_web.pdf (Accessed March 15, 2025).

Taylor, J. R., and Van Every, E. J. (2000). The emergent organization: communication as its site and surface. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Von Allmen, B., Schüpbach, M., Frei, L., and Nieuwenboom, W. (2018). "Tagesschulangebote und Schulleistungsentwicklung [All-day school programmes and school performance development]" in Tagesschulen. eds. M. Schüpbach, L. Frei and W. Nieuwenboom (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien), 229–245.

Weick, K. E., Sutcliffe, K., and Obstfeld, D. (2005). Organizing and the process of Sensemaking. *Organ. Sci.* 16, 409–421. doi: 10.1287/orsc.1050.0133

Wetzel, M., and Näpfli, J. (2022). Was Kindern in Tagesschulen und Krippen wichtig ist [What is important to children in day schools and day nurseries]. *Bildung Schweiz* 2. doi: 10.26041/fhnw-7691

Windlinger, R. (2020). "Arbeiten in Tagesschulen - Einführung in den Sammelband [Working in all-day schools - introduction]" in Arbeiten in der Tagesschule: Einblicke und Impulse für die Weiterentwicklung. ed. R. Windlinger (Bern: Hep), 9–20.

Witzel, A. (2000). Das problemzentrierte interview. [The problem centered interview] forum qualitative Sozialforschung/forum: qualitative. *Soc. Res.* 1:22. doi: 10.17169/fqs-1.1.1132