The Swiss Education System(s): Overview and Characteristics

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Overview

- Switzerland
  languages – cantons – education systems
- The Education Systems in Switzerland
  - Compulsory education
  - Upper secondary education
  - Higher education
- The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)
- Universities of Teacher Education
Switzerland: Basic Data

- **Population:** 7.9 Mio. in 2010 (in 1900: 3.3 Mio.), of whom 22.4% are not Swiss citizens
- **Area:** 41,285 km²
- **Life expectancy at birth:** ♂ 79.8 / ♀ 84.4 years
- **No. of children per woman:** 1.40

**Household sizes** (in %, only private households)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5 and over</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>12.9</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of persons
Switzerland: 4 National Languages

Geographical distribution of the languages of Switzerland (2000)

- **German**
- **French**
- **Italian**
- **Romansh**
- **Bilingual areas and cities**


Languages Spoken in Switzerland

1. German (63.67 %)
2. French (20.38 %)
3. Italian (6.46 %)
4. Serbian and Croatian (1.53 %)
5. Albanian (1.30 %)
6. Portuguese (1.23 %)
7. Spanish (1.06 %)
8. English (1.01 %)
9. Turkish (0.61 %)
10. Raetho-Romanic (0.48 %)
11. Other Slavic languages (0.32 %)
12. Other languages (1.95 %)

Source: FSO, census 2000
The 26 Cantons of Switzerland
26 cantonal ministries of education

- Federalism (sovereignty of the cantons) and decentralisation (high local responsibilities)
- No national Ministry of Education, but 26 cantonal ones

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>No. of teachers</th>
<th>No. of students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zurich</td>
<td>1,307,600</td>
<td>8,420</td>
<td>122,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zug</td>
<td>109,100</td>
<td>991</td>
<td>10,898</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appenzell-I.Rh.</td>
<td>15‘500</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>2,060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switzerland (no MoE)</td>
<td>7,593,500</td>
<td>75,878</td>
<td>788,072</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: FSO, 2007 (data for primary and secondary schools, grade 1 to 9)
The Education System(s) in Switzerland

Source: www.educa.ch
Compulsory Education

Pre-school level (Kindergarten, 1 or 2 years)

- At least one year of kindergarten compulsory in 15 cantons, optional in 11 cantons
- Starting age: 4 years old
- Focus on social issues
- Training of pre-school teachers now at Universities of Teacher Education (B.A.)
Compulsory Education

Primary level

- Class teacher principle
- Foreign languages in most **Swiss German** cantons:
  - First foreign language: Grade 3 (English)
  - Second foreign language: Grade 5 (French)

Foreign languages in most **Swiss French** cantons:
- First foreign language: Grade 3 (German)
- Second foreign language: Grade 5 (English)
Compulsory Education

Lower secondary level

- Selection according to intellectual capacities (1-4 streams)
- Teacher specialisation in 2-4 subjects

General

- 95% of the children attend governmental schools (private schools: e.g international schools, schools with specific pedagogy [Steiner, Montessori etc.])
- Strategically, the cantons are responsible for compulsory education
- The operational responsibility is with the municipalities
Trends / on-going reforms

- School entrance phase (Basisstufe)
  - Pre-school ☝️ lower primary grades
- LP 21: Joint curriculum for all German speaking cantons
- HarmoS: Harmonisation of main elements of compulsory education
  - 11 years by integrating 2 years of pre-school level
  - Education starts at the age of 4
  - Harmonisation of education standards in languages, natural science and mathematics
- Organisation of school days: block lessons / day care
- Integration of children with special needs
Upper Secondary Education

- Matura schools (Gymnasium)
- Specialised middle schools (Fachmittelschulen)
- Vocational education and training (Berufsbildung)

Characteristics

- 90% of the Swiss teenagers achieve a degree at upper secondary level
- About 20% of Swiss children attend matura schools
- Maturity certificates of any canton are valid for admission to all Swiss universities
- High flexibility of Swiss education system: Career modifications possible
Higher education

- Universities
- Universities of Applied Science
- Universities of Teacher Education
- Higher vocational education

Characteristics
- Bologna system implemented
- All schools are governmental institutions
- EU mobility programmes (i.e. Erasmus) in place
Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK)

- Coordination of educational policy at national level
- Political body consisting of 26 cantonal ministers of education
- Instruments of the EDK:
  - Binding intercantonal agreements (concordats)
  - Recommendations

Source: www.edk.ch
Universities of Teacher Education

- 13 Universities of Teacher Education in Switzerland
- Established in 2002-2004 (successor institutions of 96 teacher training colleges, half of them at upper secondary level)
- Development of new system took around 15 years
University of Teacher Education
Central Switzerland

- Supported by the six cantons of Central Switzerland, Lucerne, Nidwalden, Obwalden, Schwyz, Uri, Zug.
- Three sites:
  Lucerne, Schwyz, Zug
- Pre-service teacher education for the pre-school, primary, and lower secondary level
- In-service teacher education
- Supplementary training for teachers (e.g. DAS, CAS, MAS)
  -> CAS and MAS in School management
- Research and development
- Services in the area of schools and education (e.g. e-learning support, drama education, diversity education)

Size (2008):
- 1440 student, 375 academic staff
- Average costs per student: € 20’000-25’000
- Every student pays € 900 per year
Federalistic:
- 26 ministries of education -> takes into account cultural differences between cantons (4 different languages/cultural areas)
- Schools run by municipalities

Good system of apprenticeships combined with vocational education

90% children obtain a degree at upper secondary level (at age of 18/19)

System with a high degree of flexibility

Free choice of universities for students with a matura (no ranking of universities)
Thank you for your attention!