

Switzerland Country Summary

Table of Contents

	Page(s)
General Information and Statistics	2
Current Education Reform Context	3
• <i>Harmonization of the Compulsory Stage of Education</i>	
• <i>Development of National System of Educational Monitoring</i>	
• <i>Additional Reforms</i>	
Teacher Policy Highlights	4-6
• <i>Attracting and Supporting New Teachers</i>	
○ <i>Recruitment</i>	
○ <i>Induction (Canton Zurich)</i>	
• <i>Improving Schools as Places to Work and Learn</i>	
○ <i>Ongoing Professional Development</i>	
• <i>Improving Compensation and Professional Opportunities</i>	
○ <i>Performance-based Pay (Canton Zurich)</i>	
Focus on the Induction Initiative in the Canton of Zurich	7-10
• <i>Induction in Canton Zurich</i>	
○ <i>Overview of Swiss Induction</i>	
○ <i>Induction in the Canton of Zurich</i>	
▪ <i>Program Structure</i>	
▪ <i>Coursework</i>	
▪ <i>Counseling Hours</i>	
▪ <i>Experienced Colleague (mentor)</i>	
▪ <i>Program Evaluation</i>	
References/Additional Information	11

Please note: The majority of the information in this document was taken directly from the Switzerland Background Report (SRED, 2003) and the Switzerland Country Note (OECD, 2003) that were written for the publication of *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers* (OECD, 2005). Country representatives provided additional information. This country profile was created for the Aspen-OECD Bellagio Seminar, How Can Teacher Policies Improve Student Learning? October 17-20, 2006, Bellagio, Italy.

Switzerland

Country Summary—General Facts and Information

Population: ~7,400,000 (Canton Zurich: ~1.2 M)

Education expenditures:

- As a percentage of GDP (includes primary, secondary and tertiary): 5.4%
- Per pupil expenditure in US dollars (2001) (includes primary, secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary): \$8,844 (OECD, 2005b)

Teacher demographics: (73,200 teachers)

- Gender distribution (% female):
 - Primary: 71%
 - Lower secondary: 40%
 - Upper secondary (all programs): 32%
- Percentage of unqualified teachers: 4%
- Salary after 15 years experience (equivalent US \$): \$59,000 (OECD, 2005a)
- A significant portion voluntarily hold part-time positions (30% pre-school, 46% primary level, 47% lower-secondary and 66% upper-secondary).

Student demographics: (760,000)

- Vast majority in public schools at pre-school, primary and lower and upper secondary
- Immigrants not speaking German, French nor Italian make up 9% of population and this percentage is increasing
- Graduation rate (Upper secondary (2003)): 90% (OECD, 2005a)
- PISA Math mean score (2003): 574 (above OECD average) (OECD, 2005a)

Structure of the education system:

- Governance:
 - Federal political structure, 26 cantons (states) have responsibility for education (except vocational education); no federal ministry of education
 - Education ministers in each canton elected for 4- or 5-year terms
 - Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education serves as forum for national policy collaboration, but has no formal authority over the cantons
 - Locally elected school committees (communes) run local school systems
 - Highly engaged citizenry (local ballot measures determine education issues)
 - 18 cantons are German-speaking, 7 French-speaking, 1 Italian-speaking
- Teacher employment:
 - Teachers employed by communal school authorities, appointed for 4-6 years, generally with fixed-term contracts (automatic pay increases)
 - Preparation: 3, 4, and 4.5+ years (preschool/primary, lower secondary, and exam schools, respectively)
 - Unionization: Teachers not employed under collective labor agreements; approx. 2/3 of teachers are members of trade unions (highly engaged in policy at all levels)
- Average class size:
 - Public primary: 20 (OECD, 2004, p. 35)
 - Public lower secondary: 19 (OECD, 2004 p. 35)

Curriculum and Assessment:

- For primary and lower-secondary, cantons provide curricula to schools; for secondary level there is a Swiss national core curriculum (with regional adaptation)
- Elementary school: grades 1-6; Lower secondary school: grades 7-9 with three tracks (Pre-Gymnasium; General education (Mittelschule) – majority of students; and Technical/vocational)

Current Education Reform Context in Switzerland

This section summarizes current education reform initiatives to provide context for the discussion of teacher policies that follows.

Harmonization of the Compulsory Stage of Education

- The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education wants to coordinate the primary and lower-secondary curriculum content and assessments as a means for ensuring quality and consistency across cantons.
- There will be mandatory levels for skill attainment which will be applicable nationwide.
- The initial phase is the development of descriptions of target skill levels in languages (mathematics and natural sciences to follow).

Development of National System of Educational Monitoring

- Starting in 2002, the cantons began to build a national system of educational monitoring.
- This includes regular measurement of skill levels in order to evaluate particular aspects of education for the country.
- The goal is to build a knowledge base for interventions based on better educational indicators.

Additional Reforms

- Lowering the age for starting school
- Doing more to promote the learning of foreign languages
- Specifying a national set of skills at specific benchmark years for students
- Making it easier to switch between different streams of education
- Promoting the integration of technology

Switzerland Teacher Policy Highlights

Attracting and Supporting New Teachers

Recruitment:

- The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education has made “strengthening the teaching profession” one of its key missions due to:
 - potential shortages of teachers in some subjects and regions; and
 - concern that the social standing and attractiveness of teaching needs improvement.
- One strategy the ministers used to address these issues was to integrate the old teacher preparation “colleges” or “seminaries” into the overall higher education system.
 - Previously, non-exam school teachers attended separate teacher training institutions not connected to the university system. (This meant that teachers of grades 1-6 did not complete tertiary education.)
 - This change was aimed at not only increasing the prestige/social standing of teacher preparation, but also improving teacher training by linking it more closely with university studies.
- The ministers have also established a task force called *Strengthening the Teaching Profession* to consider issues of:
 - professional image,
 - a forward-looking job description for the profession of teacher,
 - devising suitable recruitment strategies, and
 - the creation of new career prospects and opportunities.
- This task force resulted in the following actions:
 - A survey among the cantons about the teaching force,
 - A study to look into recruitment, and
 - A national campaign disseminating informational materials about becoming a teacher targeted at upper secondary students (including a new web site).
- The issue of who chooses to teach (and why) is currently of great interest. Recent studies have been carried out to determine what factors influence the decision to teach. The studies suggest that:
 - Even with the repositioning of teacher education to universities there is difficulty attracting high quality students into teacher preparation programs.
 - Students who study the arts and humanities in upper-secondary school are most likely to choose to teach.
 - A majority of prospective teachers come from lower socio-economic backgrounds than other professions.
- Currently, the ministers have begun to project future needs of the teaching profession based on changes in the school system and social conditions.

Induction:

- The majority of cantons have an induction program run by the Universities of Teacher Education.
- Responsibility for providing services is shared by schools, regions (sub-units to cantonal governments) and cantonal governments:
 - Schools provide orientation to the school, schedule, school staff, school materials.
 - Regions or universities sponsor practice groups and counseling.
 - Cantons or universities offer formal courses and funding for induction staff and facilities.
- Programs vary by canton with extensive use of these elements:
 - Individual contact with the teacher in charge (interviews, observations, etc.)
 - Mentoring
 - Mentors are experienced teachers trained to assist new teachers
 - Services provided at the actual place of work
 - Mentors are paid for their work
 - Counseling
 - New teachers have “counseling” hours available to them
 - New teachers may seek help from any experienced teacher (one with expertise in an area in which the teacher seeks help) who is then paid for this work
 - Practice groups
 - Formal and informal groups of new teachers to share experiences
 - Facilitated by trained, experienced teachers
 - Includes opportunities to observe each other and experienced teachers
 - Specific sessions to orient new teachers at the beginning of the school year
 - Special programs of targeted further training based on individual needs
- Ongoing research is conducted of each program and findings are used to improve the programs.

Improving Schools as Places to Work and Learn

Ongoing Professional Development:

Note: Given the decentralized nature of the cantons and the system of education, how professional development works varies across cantons, although responsibility for in-service training is shared by the federal government and the cantons.

- Professional development is undergoing major reform. A government press release described the reform as follows: “... in a modern concept of the teaching profession, the school is a place in which a team of adults collaborate to prepare men and women for tomorrow – and continue to learn in their company.”
- Three proposed goals of the professional development reform are:
 - Making professional development (personal, content-related and pedagogical) part of teachers’ career progression,
 - Improving instruction and pedagogy throughout the school, and

- Developing organizational structures and curricular frameworks to support this professional growth.
- Recently, in-school professional development has become a growing part of school budgets. (Universities of Teacher Education, private providers, and federal offices all also offer professional development.)
- Several national and cantonal institutions have developed an Internet platform as a vehicle for publishing in-service offerings in order to centralize information about opportunities.
- The OECD country report notes that there is no existing evaluation mechanism for professional development programs.
- In some cantons, teacher-assessment systems have been introduced which require that teacher training be undertaken to eliminate identified weaknesses.

Improving Compensation and Career Opportunities

Career Opportunities for Teachers:

- Induction programs provide roles for veteran teachers to use their expertise:
 - Experienced teachers might be mentors, run practice groups, or serve as counselors for new teachers upon request.
 - Teachers are trained and compensated for these additional roles.
- Specialized professional development/continuing education programs resulting in specialized certificates/roles for teachers that are recognized nationwide (i.e., teachers can become “vocational consultants” which focus on helping students choose careers).
- With all teacher education now located at the tertiary level, teachers now have the opportunity to earn a degree for further studies they choose to pursue.

Performance-based Pay:

- In most cantons, pay is based on seniority (salaries go up automatically each year according to the pay scale – which also reflects the level of teaching).
- Two cantons, however, have replaced this system with a merit-based system (Zurich is described below). Salary increases depend on teacher assessments.
- Canton Zurich system:
 - Merit-pay is part of an overall school quality project.
 - Assessments occur approximately once every four years.
 - Teachers only receive salary increases if their assessment results are truly outstanding (1-3% pay increase for four years following the assessment).
 - Assessments are based on observations, a prepared document by the teacher explaining pedagogical objectives and methodology, and a personal assessment.

Focus on Current Teacher Policy Initiative Canton of Zurich – Induction Program

Note: This summary of the induction programs in Switzerland and the program in the canton of Zurich is taken directly from the profile in *Comprehensive Teacher Induction: Systems for Early Career Learning* (Britton, Paine, Pimm & Raizen, 2003). In addition, it was edited by Barbara Dangel (barbara.dangel@phzh.ch), head of induction at the University of Teacher Education in Zurich.

An Overview of Induction in Switzerland

Two central beliefs that underlie Swiss induction in the canton of Zurich and throughout the country are that:

- Teachers are assumed to be lifelong learners. Institutions and staff in each canton are devoted to the continuing professional development of teachers; and
- Induction is not seen as an extension of pre-service training or professional development. (The idea is that new teachers face unique challenges that are distinct from experienced teachers).

The following working principles guide the induction system throughout the country:

- Separation of evaluation from support;
- Treating teachers as adult learners;
- A focus on problems arising out of practice;
- Seeing induction as a phase that focuses on the development of the individual as well as the professional; and
- Special institutional and staffing arrangements.

The following induction activities are utilized to varying degrees and in different combinations throughout the cantons:

- Trained mentors;
- Obligatory or voluntary courses during the first two years of teaching;
- Required or informal practice groups of other new teachers led by trained, experienced teachers (participants observe each other and veteran teachers; discuss teaching strategies); and
- “Counseling hours” available to new teachers in their first two years to seek assistance from a specific teacher on any issue (counseling is often provided by a faculty from the new teacher’s pre-service institution).

Induction in the Canton of Zurich

Induction in Zurich has a long history. The program began as a way of continuing a teacher’s initial preparation (teachers are not fully certified until completion of two years of the program). This summary describes the structure of the induction program, the four primary

components of the program (coursework, counseling, and guidance from an experienced colleague), and the training of mentors/counselors and the ongoing evaluation of the system.

Program Structure

Induction programs (in Zurich and other cantons) are provided through a combination of services from the schools, the regions (subunits of cantonal government) and the canton itself. These various levels of the education system all contribute to the induction of new teachers. In Zurich, schools handle orientation to the specific school (schedules, working with other staff, finding materials, etc.) while cantonal offices offer the supplementary courses, provide substitutes during induction activities and facilitate the provision of counseling sessions.

The three primary components of the Zurich induction program are 1) coursework (required and voluntary opportunities); 2) voluntary counseling hours available to teachers during their first two years, and 3) “experienced colleagues” (mentors) provided to each new teacher.

Coursework

There are two components to coursework during induction. There is a mandatory four-week course and a set of voluntary courses. The four-week course takes place at the end of the teacher’s second year (during February and March). This course is led by the head of the induction program for the canton. The content of the course includes sessions on pedagogy, psychology, didactics and subject-matter content. These courses are provided by university professors specializing in these areas. In determining the content of these courses, new teachers are asked to identify areas in which they would like to receive instruction and assistance.

During the course, teachers are placed in groups of two to four teachers working on similar issues. The idea is that this will create an informal network for ongoing collaboration beyond the induction course. The groups each have two leaders. These leaders include an induction specialist (from the teacher preparation institution) and an experienced teacher. The canton provides for substitutes while the new teachers attend the induction course. Often, the substitute teachers are students in the teacher preparation program at the university completing their clinical experiences.

In addition to the required four-week course, there are 3-8 voluntary courses offered throughout the induction period. Teachers may attend these courses if the content seems applicable to their needs.

Counseling Hours

In Zurich, teachers in their first two years have the opportunity to make use of 16 hours of individual counseling at their request. The focus of counseling is developing the teacher as both a professional and an individual. Fifty percent of new teachers take advantage of counseling hours. Both first and second year teachers make use of counseling hours.

Counseling sessions are designed to meet the individual's needs. They may be held at the school (where the counselor is likely to observe the teacher and provide feedback and assistance), or they may be held at the induction center. During the initial meeting, the teacher and counselor create a contract which delineates what will be accomplished during their work together. Six to eight sessions are allowed per counseling request. An induction counselor is an experienced teacher; he/she studied psychology at the university and has a counseling certificate.

In addition to individual counseling, the induction program uses the counseling requests to form groups of approximately six teachers to meet to discuss a common issue. These group meetings are facilitated by a counselor familiar with the specific area under discussion. These groups are not as elaborate and formal as some of the practice groups that are utilized in the induction programs of other cantons. Nonetheless, these groups are designed to create opportunities for ongoing collaboration beyond the counseling process and beyond the early years of teaching.

“Experienced Colleague” (mentoring¹)

Each new teacher has an “Experienced Colleague” at their school site assigned to help them in their first two years. This colleague is prepared for their role at the university and they are compensated for their training and their work. These colleagues help new teachers with every aspect of school life during the two-year induction period. The colleague only serves a supportive function; they do not evaluate the new teacher. The new teacher is guaranteed between 10 and 42 hours of assistance from the colleague and their work is unstructured so that it can be used as needed.

¹ The term mentor is used in Switzerland to refer to the person who assists student-teachers. Therefore, “experienced colleague” is the term given to the person who assists new teachers in their schools.

Program Evaluation

Zurich (like other cantons) has undertaken ongoing research and data collection about the progress and success of its induction program. Questionnaires are used to obtain feedback from teachers in order to identify areas of improvement of the program. The program is modified annually modified to reflect areas identified as in need of change.

References

Britton, E., Paine, L., Pimm, D., & Raizen, S. (Eds.). (2003). *Comprehensive teacher induction*. Norwell, MA: Kluwer.

Swiss Council for Research (2003). *Swiss Country OECD Background Report*. SRED, Geneva.

OECD (2004) *Switzerland Country Note*, OECD, Paris.

OECD (2005a). *Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2005*, OECD, Paris.

OECD, (2005b). *OECD Factbook 2005*. OECD, Paris.

OECD (2005c). *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*, OECD, Paris.

Additional Information

Zurich induction program homepage (German): www.phzh.ch