



LITERACY IN GERMAN- SPEAKING SWITZERLAND

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Key to the report

Chapter 2 is the heart of our report: This is about the issues of the organisation and the jurisdiction of the Swiss educational system.

Readers can read the report in detail or skim over the text, because it is made up of different sorts of texts:

Lead texts: blue characters.

Overview: «What it is about», blue boxes.

Conclusions: yellow boxes.

→ To gain a quick overview, only read these texts. For more detailed information read at least the running text and the text in the green boxes:

Running text: Standard.

Core texts: green boxes.

In addition readers find more information in the following boxes:

Additional or further information: purple boxes.

Related links: turquoise boxes.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Context

This report on the state of literacy in the German part of Switzerland is one of a series produced in 2015 and 2016 by ELINET, the European Literacy Policy Network. ELINET was founded in February 2014 and has 78 partner organisations in 28 European countries (for more information about the network and its activities see: www.eli-net.eu). ELINET aims to improve literacy policies in its members' countries in order to reduce the number of children, young people and adults with low literacy skills. One major tool to achieve this aim is to produce reliable, up-to-date and comprehensive reports on the state of literacy in each country where ELINET has one or more partners, and to provide guidance towards improving literacy policies in those countries. The reports are based (wherever possible) on available, internationally comparable performance data, as well as reliable national data provided (and translated) by our partners.

ELINET continues the work of the **European Union High Level Group of Experts on Literacy** (HLG) which was established by the European Commission in January 2011 and reported in September 2012¹. All 30 country reports produced by ELINET use a common theoretical framework which is described here: «**ELINET Country Reports – Frame of Reference**» (May 2015)

(http://www.eli-net.eu/fileadmin/ELINET/Redaktion/user_upload/Frame_of_Reference_28052015_website.pdf)

The **Short Country Reports** are organised around the three recommendations of the HLG report:

- Creating a literate environment
- Improving the quality of teaching
- Increasing participation, inclusion and equity.

Within its two-years funding period ELINET will complete 30 Short Country Reports which are based on the ELINET Country Reports «Frame of Reference» (published on the ELINET website) and on much longer internal work papers. Furthermore, we will publish a limited number of Comprehensive Country Reports covering all age groups. All reports will be published on the ELINET website (www.eli-net.eu) in the section «Research». They will be accompanied by a collection of good practice examples and the **European Framework of Good Practice in Raising Literacy Levels** to be found in the section «Good Practice».

¹ In the following, the final report of the EU High Level Group of Experts on Literacy is referenced as «HLG report». This report can be downloaded under the following link: http://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/doc/literacy-report_en.pdf

1.2 Introduction to the Report on German-speaking Switzerland

What does being literal mean today? And how is Switzerland contributing to this field? Which institutions get involved in the promotion of literacy? In what form? This report was written in connection with the European Literacy Project ELiNet (European Literacy Policy Network) under the lead of the Centre for Reading, Writing and Media and highlights the specific situation of Switzerland. This first version is limited to German-speaking Switzerland in all its details. While this limitation is unfortunate, it was inevitable due to scarce resources.

What it is about

The literacy report at hand is intended to provide an initial overview of the actors in (German-speaking) Switzerland who are active in the promotion of literacy. The purpose is to create a base through which the promotion of literacy can be addressed coherently in future.

Unique Swiss Features:

Swiss education is not controlled centrally, nor is it in the hands of the Federal Government. Rather, the cantons or the municipalities hold the power of decision in important educational matters.

- In addition to numerous migration languages, Switzerland has four national languages and is divided into 26 cantons; the education system is largely regulated by these cantons.
- The education system in Switzerland is organised in a subsidiary manner: the Confederation acts in an organisational and comprehensive capacity whenever other actors are not yet inherently active.

→ See Chapter 2 for more information.

These peculiarities mean that a report like this one must always remain incomplete. In this first version, it is also exclusively referring to German-speaking Switzerland.

Overview (see also figure 1):

- At the very beginning in Chapter 2, the basic principle of subsidiarity in Switzerland will be discussed. It is essential for all responsibilities in terms of education. Here we explain how the actors in the Swiss educational landscape are organised – generally and more specifically with reference to the promotion of literacy.
- Chapter 3 gives an overview over Swiss performance data concerning literacy.
- Chapter 4 is devoted to the promotion and teaching of literacy at school. It looks at how universities of applied sciences in teacher education and universities train teachers and which sectors Swiss universities engage in when it comes to researching and developing new concepts for teaching.
- Chapter 5 provides an overview over the means of the implementation of the promotion of literacy at school, namely the Swiss curricula (in particular Curriculum 21), the school material used in German-speaking Switzerland, and educational monitoring.
- In addition to the school, there are a variety of institutions and projects dedicated to the promotion of literacy outside school, namely the pre-school promotion of literacy (see Chapter 6),
- reading and writing in leisure time (see chapter 7) and
- the promotion of literacy in adulthood (see chapter 8) – the projects, in other words, which follow the transition from elementary school to the life of adults.

Each chapter ends with a conclusion, where the given information is considered and reflected in terms of future activities in the field of literacy.

Literacy Promotion: an indication of an organisational chart and responsibilities

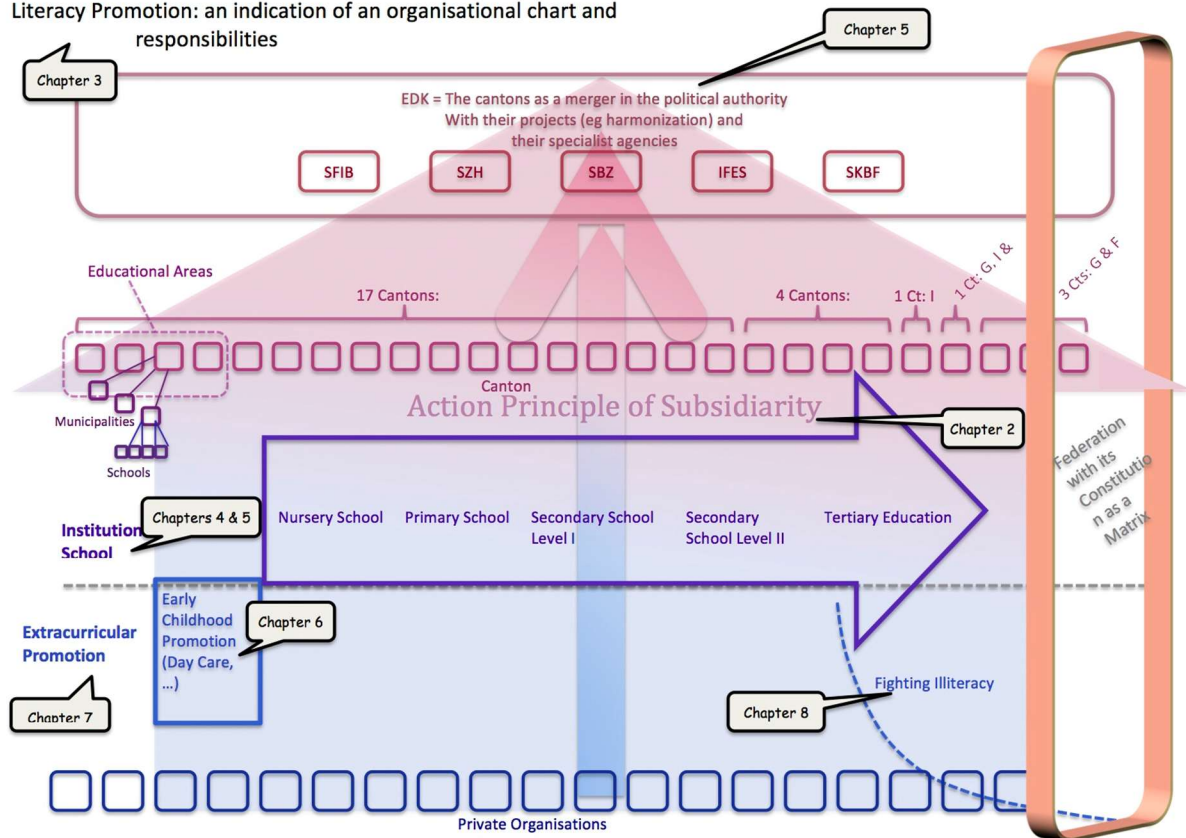


Figure 1: Graphical overview of the Swiss education system and the report at hand

2 Political and Legal Framework of Literality Furtherance in Switzerland

Due to the principle of subsidiarity, federalism, and multilingualism, the responsibilities of the various actors in the Swiss education system are sometimes confusing. After a brief introduction, the individual levels with their actors are taken into view, and their interactions explained. The graphic in figure 1 provides a schematic overview.

What it is about

Switzerland is organised subsidiarily: the cantons are generally responsible for the educational system. The government is active federally or on a regional basis only if neither the cantons nor private organisations (e.g. foundations) are active on their own.

Under the heading of «harmonisation», efforts have been made for several years to design the Swiss educational system in such a way that the individual cantonal systems are adapted to each other. This goal has only been partially achieved.

See e.g. the Curriculum 21.

Language Situation in Switzerland

Multilingualism. Switzerland has four national languages: German, French, Italian and Romansh. Switzerland's four national languages are written in the Federal Constitution². Caused by migration there are lots of other languages – therefore Switzerland is a multilingual country.

Diglossia. In German-speaking Switzerland, there is a juxtaposition of Dialect and Standard German. Depending on the situation (formal – informal), interview participants (Swiss German – other language speakers), and context (letter, email, WhatsApp, ...), dialect or standard German is used both in either writing or spoken language. The use of dialect or Standard German says nothing about the social status of a person.

Swiss Standard German or «Swiss High German» is the national variety of German, which is written and spoken in Switzerland as the standard language. The Swiss Standard German is subject of instruction in schools and the language of instruction. It is used in written form in official documents, magazines, and newspapers, and it is codified (Variantenwörterbuch des Deutschen, Schweizer Schülertexten).

Pluricentricity of the German Language. Equivalent to Swiss Standard German, there is the Austrian and the German Standard German. These three national languages are equal. The principle of national varying degrees of standard languages is called pluricentricity.³

Box 1: Language Situation in Switzerland

Subsidiarity – the leading organisation principle in the Swiss educational landscape

In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, tasks are always performed by the smallest possible political or institutional authority and only left to the next higher authority if they cannot be managed.

Box 2: Principle of Subsidiarity

² The four national languages are written in Article 8 of the Federal Constitution. In addition, the Constitution (Article 70) stipulates that the exchange and understanding between the languages must be promoted and that special support is given to both Italian and Romansh.

³ Ammon (1995)

2.1 Organisation of Education in Switzerland

2.1.1 Switzerland before HarmoS

In Switzerland, education is subject to the principle of subsidiarity. Against this backdrop, the individual cantons are responsible for their education system, leaving a great deal of scope for municipalities in administrative matters. This led to such differences in the school systems in the individual cantons that the mobility of schoolchildren was impaired.

Promotion of Language in Compulsory School

Until the efforts for harmonisation (cf. Chapter 2.2), the first language taught in Switzerland was a local standard language, followed later by a second national language. This second language was learned in an isolated manner, but the aim was the same: to master both languages as correctly and fluently as possible.⁴ The cantons in the different language regions were allowed to follow this learning approach individually and were to choose the second national language according to their own needs.

In the meantime, a rethinking has taken place: More and more children are in contact with different languages and cultures – also because of increasing migration. On the other hand, it is now acknowledged that the learning of different languages should not occur in an isolated but rather in a connected manner.⁵ Under these premises, the understanding of learning a language has changed to a communicative, action-oriented, multilingual competency.

In this context, the 1990s were marked by the elaboration of a much-needed new Swiss language concept. Moreover, the importance of English as a language of science and media as well as an international lingua franca demanded that it be integrated in the curriculum as an additional foreign language. Some cantons were planning to integrate English at the primary school level. At the same time, the national unity and mobility within Switzerland remained a central concern. Following these reasons, the cantons faced the challenge to work on a solution applicable for all of Switzerland.⁶

However, as a countrywide regulation could not be worked out by the individual cantons, the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) took over the coordination of language teaching in accordance with the subsidiarity principle to compose a uniform language concept.

Box 3: Language Promotion in Transition

⁴ Hutterli et al. (2012)

⁵ Hutterli et al. (2012)

⁶ EDK (2004)

2.1.2 The Concordat of HarmoS

In 2006, Swiss voters decided that the compulsory school in Switzerland should be harmonised. The EDK (cf. box 4, "EDK") defined the duration and objectives of the different levels of education as well as language teaching in the so-called Concordat of HarmoS («Intercantonal Agreement on the Harmonisation of Compulsory School»). The Concordat came into effect on 1st August 2009.

EDK

Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) is a national political authority, formed by all 26 cantonal directors of education.⁷ The association has existed since 1897; The 1970 School Commission is the starting point for the form of cooperation within the EDK. It has a number of tools at its disposal to address educational issues that are of national interest. However, these instruments are only binding for the individual cantons if they approve or accede to them (cf. box 5, «The Instruments of the EDK»).

Box 4: EDK

In the 2007 «HarmoS-Concordat»⁸, the cantons involved define compulsory school by aligning **school structures** and **learning objectives of language teaching** to one another. Furthermore, they develop instruments for the coordination throughout Switzerland⁹ (cf. Chapter 5, Harmonisation of Educational Objectives).

The Instruments of the EDK

Concordats: the most binding instrument of intercantonal cooperation in education is the concordat with legally binding character. However, each canton decides on accession to a concordat and is therefore the last decision-making unit.

Recommendations: the EDK can make recommendations to help promote and harmonise the education system. Contrary to the concordats, recommendations do not create any legal obligations.

Declarations: the EDK takes a position on questions of education policy in the form of declarations.

Box 5: The Instruments of the EDK

The Concordat defines the **structure** or rather the duration of the individual school levels (8 years of Primary School – including the first two years of Nursery School – and 3 years of Secondary School Level I). Thus, it harmonises the duration of the school grades, which have been different from canton to canton until now.

The HarmoS Concordat also aims to **harmonise the language-region specific curricula and to coordinate the teaching materials** (see. Chapter 5.1, Curriculum 21). In the context of language teaching, the HarmoS Concordat regulates the number of foreign languages to be learned during compulsory schooling, as well as the latest possible start of foreign language teaching (cf. box 6)¹⁰.

Point in Time for Foreign Languages according to HarmoS

- A first foreign language (a national language or English) is learned from the fifth year of education (at the age of eight).
- A second foreign language (a national language or English) is learned from the seventh year of education (at the age of ten).
- A third foreign language (a national language) is optional from the ninth year of education (at the age of twelve).

Box 6: Point on Time for Foreign Languages according to HarmoS

⁷ The Principality of Liechtenstein holds an advisory function within the EDK and can assume concordats as well as provisions with all rights and obligations.

⁸ The EDK published a strategy paper on the further development of language teaching in March 2004 (EDK, 2004). The benchmarks of the strategy paper have been incorporated into the HarmoS concordat.

⁹ EDK (2007)

¹⁰ Hutterli et al. (2012)

With these guidelines for foreign languages, the EDK was able to harmonise the start of foreign language teaching. However, this was not achieved for the order in which the languages should be learned, and the resulting compromise takes into account the self-determination of the cantons. This resulted in two different models:¹¹

1. French-speaking Switzerland, the bilingual and German-speaking cantons near the language border (BE, BL, BS, FR, SO and VS = «Passepartout»-cantons) as well as the cantons GR and TI teach a national language as a first foreign language.
2. The remaining German-speaking cantons begin with English and later introduce French as a second foreign language.

By joining the HarmoS Concordat, the cantons are also committed to promoting the development and anchoring of **HSK instruction** (= teaching in the native language and culture, or Unterricht in Heimatlicher Sprache und Kultur). In this way, children with an immigration background can consolidate and perfect their first language in a school environment. The organising institutions of HSK teaching are the consulate, embassy or parent society of the different countries of origin. The cantons in HarmoS provide free classrooms, school infrastructure and further education for the coordinators as well as the HSK teachers.

¹¹ The cantons of AR, GR, LU, NW, TG, UR and ZG did not join the concordat for various reasons; the decisions for the cantons of AG, AI, OW and SZ are still to be made (status 2016). However, all the cantons mentioned abide by the order of foreign languages as defined in the HarmoS Concordat.

2.2 Actors in the Swiss Education System

2.2.1 Federal Level

The cantons have executive power in the Swiss education system, both alone within their jurisdiction and politically incorporated in the EDK. The Confederation provides the background for ensuring this form of organisation: The **Federal Constitution** ensures that all cantons provide adequate schooling open to all children and free of charge in public schools (Art. 19). Switzerland also holds that the country has four official national languages (BV, cf. box Language Situation in Switzerland).

Furthermore, the management and financing of the two Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology are located at the federal level. In addition, the Confederation is co-financier of the cantonal universities (universities, , technical colleges, higher vocational training). The **State Secretariat for Education, Research and innovation (= SBFI)** is responsible for educational questions at the federal level.

Another principle which is guaranteed at the federal level is the principle of permeability.

Permeability

The Swiss education system is distinguished by its high permeability: There are different ways of entering school or completing an education. The Federal Constitution prescribes the permeability and transfers the concern to the Confederation and the cantons. An example for the high level of permeability is the Federal Vocational Matura: a basic vocational education with a Swiss certificate of competence (ISCED 35) can be supplemented by a vocational matura (ISCED 34). The vocational matura allows studies at a university of applied sciences (ISCED 6). The Transfer to a Swiss university is possible with the additional examination «Vocational Matura – University» (also called Passerelle).

Box 7: Permeability in the Swiss Education System

2.2.2 Language-regional Level

What it is about

Cross-cantonal cooperation takes place between cantons that pursue common interests, for example for linguistic reasons (e.g. in the case of cooperation between French-speaking cantons) or because of geographic proximity (as educational areas).

The increased co-operation between the cantons does not only take place at the national but also at the regional level or the level of language-regions¹². This applies notably to the regional agreements on the nationally defined educational objectives and thus also to the curricula. The French-speaking cantons have launched a common curriculum PER (Plan d'études romand), while the 21 German-speaking cantons have developed curriculum 21 (cf. Chapter 5.1, Curriculum 21).¹³ In accordance with the harmonisation of the curricula, intercantonal co-operation in the coordination of teaching materials exists (e.g. Die Sprachstarken, Sprachland etc.; cf. Chapter 5.2) and the performance evaluation (cf. Chapter 5.3).

Educational areas which cooperate in questions of education due to geographic proximity exist in addition to the regional conferences.¹⁴ In this context, the following are to be highlighted:

- the educational area of Central Switzerland (cantons LU, UR, SZ, OW, NW and ZG) cooperates with regard to curricula, teaching development and orientation work
- the educational area of North-western Switzerland (AG, BL, BS and SO) with the jointly supported FHNW School of Education and cooperation both in connection with teaching materials and with regard to performance tests¹⁵.

The main interest of these educational areas is a joint representation of the respective cantons in the harmonisation process of the Swiss education system.

In the matter of foreign language teaching, those cantons with French as their first foreign language («Passepartout»-regions, cf. Chapter 2.2.1 above) have joined together. They justify this by geographical proximity to the French-speaking area and coordinate curricula, teaching materials, assessment tools and methods for foreign language teaching.

¹² SKBF (2014)

¹³ For the sake of completeness: the Canton of Ticino has worked out the «Piano di studio della scuola dell'obbligo ticinese»; Intercantonal cooperation was not necessary, since Ticino is the only Italian-speaking canton.

¹⁴ The NW EDK for North-western Switzerland, the BKZ for Central Switzerland, the EDK East for Eastern Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein, and the CIIP for Romandie and Ticino, For French- and Italian-speaking Switzerland (www.edk.ch).

¹⁵ Ibid.

2.2.3 Cantonal Level

The intra-cantonal responsibilities for regulation, financing and execution vary according to the level of education and the educational institution. The following chapter will present these differently organised responsibilities in detail.

What it is about

In most questions of education, the responsibility lies with the cantons. However, the Confederation, the cantons as well as other institutions from the working world or providers of private education work closely together.

The cantons are responsible for the specific design of the education policy as well as the choice of the first foreign language. For this reason, different school systems can exist between different cantons. Due to current trends (cf. Box 3), harmonisation efforts are being undertaken throughout Switzerland. However, these cannot be managed by individual cantons. Thus, the EDK is responsible for the country-wide coordination (cf. box 6). All competences – which, due to the joint harmonisation efforts, are determined by the intercantal merger EDK – must be recognised or rejected by each canton individually.

The subsidiarity principle in the education system of Switzerland is applied down to the lowest levels. The different responsibilities at the cantonal level are distributed among cantons, municipalities, schools and lessons (cf. box 6).¹⁶

Who is responsible for what?

Canton. Educational policies and regulations, curricula, resources, supervision

Municipalities. Educational policy implementation and organisation, strategic management of schools, infrastructure

Schools. Operational school management, quality and personnel management, teaching development, parent participation

Lessons.

Teachers: teaching, class management, assessment and career guidance, parent contacts

Pupils: Learning and competence building, social behaviour and personality development, career decisions

Box 8: Cantonal Education Levels¹⁷

In the last twenty years, the control of the compulsory school has undergone a change in most cantons. While control mechanisms in the past were rather input-oriented (e.g. on prescriptions for teaching aids, teaching material and financing), the current trend is to give more scope to the **municipalities and individual schools** while also monitoring the quality and processes¹⁸.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ Inspired by Fend, 2008

¹⁸ SKBF (2014)

a Compulsory School

The cantons are responsible for the regulation of the compulsory school, while the municipalities are responsible for the **Nursery Schools** (ISCED 020)¹⁹ as well as the **Primary School** (ISCED 1) and **Secondary School Level I** (ISCED 2) (in some cases the cantons are also responsible for aforementioned schools). This means that all teaching content for compulsory school is given by the individual cantons and executed by the municipalities. Supplementary school programs, e.g. German as a Second Language teaching, are regulated correspondingly.

b Secondary School Level II

Vocational training (ISCED 35) is the responsibility of the Confederation, the cantons and the workplace organisations. The three partners are working together to create a high-quality vocational training. They aim at a labour market-oriented range of training and education courses. The responsibilities of the partners are regulated in the Vocational Training Act and the Vocational Training Regulations. The decisions in funding questions of vocational training are made by all three partners.²¹

The **Grammar Schools and Secondary Schools of Higher Education** (ISCED 34) are subject to the cantons. They hold the sponsorship and thus assume the supervision and financing. The Confederation and cantons are responsible for the recognition of the grammar school Matura throughout Switzerland. This means that all cantonal grammar school Matura qualify for admission to the Swiss universities. The Cantons are responsible for the recognition of specialist matura throughout Switzerland.

The standard classification for education serves to enable the international comparison of educational levels

Which other organisations are concerned with Secondary School Level II nationwide?

WBZ

As a specialist agency of the EDK, the Swiss Centre for Further Education WBZ is commissioned to design and offer further training courses for middle school teachers throughout Switzerland. In addition to specialist courses for teachers, the WBZ also offers further training for members of the school management and teachers with additional functions. The aim of the WBZ is to link the different actors in the field of education and to deal with important middle school topics (e.g. Matura paper, foreign languages, MINT etc.) in order to support the development and quality of the middle schools.

IFES

The institute for external school evaluation at the secondary school level II IFES is an institution of the EDK. On the one hand, it conducts evaluations and surveys at the middle schools and vocational schools of the participating cantons.²⁰ On the other hand, IFES is involved in school development, school counselling and certification. It contributes to quality assurance and development at secondary level II.

¹⁹ ISCED stands for «International Standard Classification for Education» and was developed by UNESCO. The standard classification for education serves to enable the international comparison of educational levels.

²⁰ The cantons AG, BS, BE, GR, LU, SO, TG and ZH were involved in 2015 (cf. IFES-Jahresbericht 2015).

²¹ SBFI (2015)

Graduation Rate Secondary Level II

The graduation rate at Secondary School Level II (ISCED 34 + 35) in Switzerland is 95.1% (2013).²² Post-compulsory education at secondary level II allows access to the next level of education (university, university of applied sciences, higher vocational training) and is a prerequisite for entry into the labour market. The EDK made various recommendations in 2011 to increase the graduation rate.²³ Most of them are at the intermediate point between compulsory schooling and upper secondary education:

- Various bridging measures offered by the cantons (10th school year, courses for vocational preparation etc.) www.berufsberatung.ch/dyn/1293.aspx
- Case Management Vocational Training (CM BB) for the social and professional integration of vulnerable young people²⁴
- Two-year vocational basic training with occupational test (EBA) www.eba.berufsbildung.ch/dyn/2678.aspx
- Validation of educational services from informal or non-formal education www.sbf.admin.ch/berufsbildung/01505/index.html?lang=de
- Curriculum 21: Module «Vocational Orientation»

Box 9: Graduation Rate Secondary Level II

c Tertiary Education

The **Higher Vocational Education** and **Vocational Training** (ISCED 6 and 7) are part of the training and are primarily the responsibility of businesses and individuals. They are financed privately.²⁵

Universities (universities of applied sciences in teacher education and universities) (ISCED 6, 7 + 8) are allocated to the cantons.²⁶ For quality assurance in the form of laws and agreements, the Confederation and the cantons are jointly responsible, but take due account of the autonomy of the universities.

A central task of the cantons is the **training and further education of teachers**. The EDK attests a key role to the teacher training with regard to the successful and harmonised reorientation of language teaching²⁷. The universities of applied sciences on behalf of the respective cantons provide the teacher training for the compulsory school.²⁸ The academic education of the Grammar School teachers is usually completed at the universities (cf. Chapter 4.2).

Different basic and harmonisation work has been in place in the basic training of teachers (especially in foreign language teaching) for several years. The EDK is working closely with the «swissuniversities», which act in place of the former COHEP (Swiss Conference of Rectors of Educational Universities)²⁹.

²² BFS (2015)

²³ EDK (2011)

²⁴ Egger et al. (2015)

²⁵ SBFI (2015)

²⁶ The Confederation operates the two Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology (cf. Chapter 2.2.1).

²⁷ EDK (2004)

²⁸ The university is responsible for this in the canton of Geneva

²⁹ Hutterli et al. (2012)

d Further Education

The Federal Government lays down the principles for **further vocational education** (BV64a). Further vocational training is mainly organised by private providers, the Confederation and the cantons act subsidiarily. Sponsorship, financing and execution of further education courses are organised differently in each canton.³⁰

The new Federal Law on Further Education will come into effect on 1st January 2017. With this, the importance of lifelong learning will be acknowledged, especially in literacy promotion for adults. The aim of the new law is, inter alia, to better coordinate and financially support measures for the acquisition and maintenance of **basic competences for adults** (cf. Chapter 8).³¹

The schools of education offer **further education for teachers** on behalf of the cantons. However, each school maintains an individual training program, which are prepared on the basis of research results and needs assessment (cf. Chapter 4). A further approach is not to further educate individual schools but associations of schools if they contact the school of education. In the canton of Zurich, the schools with a strongly multicultural composition have identified a common need for promotion and coordinate the further training of the teachers in the context of the QUIMS project (= quality in multicultural schools, cf. Chapter 8).³²

In some cases, the schools of education take on the training or further education of playgroup leaders and early childhood educators on their own or in collaboration with universities.

³⁰ www.edk.ch/dyn/24150.php

³¹ SBFI (2016)

³² www.vsa.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/vsa/de/schulbetrieb_und_unterricht/qualitaet_multikulturelle_schulen_quims.html

2.2.4 Further Actors

The EDK sees it as a principle for the successful further development of language teaching that political, cultural and social institutions, which are not directly active in the school sector, are involved in the language promotion and participate within their respective competences. The EDK realises this through the work on the PISA Action Plan and through the involvement of relevant specialist agencies such as the SKBF or private institutions and foundations such as the SIKJM (cf. Chapter 7).³³

SKBF

The Swiss Coordination Centre for Educational Research (SKBF) is a specialist agency of the EDK and strengthens educational research in Switzerland. In doing so, she links education policy, practice, administration, and research. In accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, the SKBF assumes tasks that are in the interest of the various actors in the Swiss education system. This includes the documentation of Swiss education research and its results as well as the informing on Swiss education research projects and its analysis. In addition, the SKBF, in collaboration with the EDK, publishes the Swiss education report (last in 2014) every four years.

The SODK (Conference of Cantonal Social Welfare Directors)³⁴ is responsible for the field of early education. As the public authorities do not have a statutory mandate for the operation of day care centres or playgroups, the institutions of **early childhood education** are run mostly privately. Funding these offers depends on the political will of each community.³⁵

In the context of literacy and education, the media developments and possibilities are also essential (cf. Chapter 3). The SFIB (a specialist agency of the EDK) is responsible for ICT.

What organisations are active in ICT across the country?

SFIB

The Swiss Department for Information Technologies in Education (SFIB) has the task of promoting the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) into the teaching in all language regions of Switzerland.

It is headquartered in Berne, Switzerland, on behalf of EDK and the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SBFI) under the direction of the Swiss Media Institute for Education and Culture **educa.ch**. The main task of the SFIB is to implement the strategies and specific tasks defined by the Federal Council and the EDK, which are laid down in the statutes of the Swiss Coordination Conference ICT and Education (SKIB).

educa.ch

The Swiss Media Institute for Education and Culture **educa.ch** is the national contact point for questions concerning information and communication technologies (ICT) in education.

educa.ch runs the Swiss Education Server (SBS) on behalf of the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SBFI) and the EDK. Additionally it leads of the Swiss Department for Information Technology in Education (SFIB).

³³ EDK (2004)

³⁴ www.sodk.ch

³⁵ According to the Federal Statistical Office, there were 2352 municipalities in Switzerland on 1st January 2014.

Since 2008, **special education** is the sole task of the individual cantons and is coordinated by the EDK. As a result of this new task allocation, each canton is obliged to define its special education program and the measures in a concept for special pedagogical (e.g. speech therapy, curative education, integrative training).

What organisations are active in the field of special education nationwide?

SZH

The Swiss Centre for Therapeutic and Special Pedagogy SZH is a national specialist and service centre co-financed by the EDK. The centre is concerned with questions of education, development and integration of people with special educational needs and with disabilities. It advises and accompanies authorities, specialist circles and the interested public. The SZH is also involved in the distribution and documentation of information with two trade journals, its own publishing house as well as an information platform and a database.

Conclusion

After all these remarks, it is clear that educational efforts in Switzerland are multifaceted. In the majority they are not centralised, but are supported by the cantons, municipalities, schools, institutions founded for this purpose and private actors.

→ According to this finding, the present report must therefore remain incomplete.

The coordination of Swiss education lies in the area of conflict between two opposing principles, namely the autonomy of the individual cantons and the national harmonisation efforts. Switzerland has a long tradition of federalism. At the same time, the desire for a uniformly organised school system is increasing as a result of changing circumstances (higher mobility of the population...). Educational questions have to be negotiated within these two (diverging) principles. It is thus not surprising that detailed discussions repeatedly occur as a result.

Education Report Switzerland

The Swiss Education Report is published every four years. It contains detailed information on the Swiss education system:

SKBF (Hrsg.) (2014): Bildungsbericht Schweiz 2104. Aarau: Schweizerische Koordinationsstelle für Bildungsforschung.
http://skbf-csre.ch/fileadmin/files/pdf/bildungsmonitoring/bildungsbericht2014/bildungsbericht_2014.pdf

Subsidiarity:

For a short overview on Subsidiarity, see also:

www.admin.ch/gov/de/start/bundesrat/das-politische-system-der-schweiz/schweizer-foederalismus.html

www.vimentis.ch/d/publikation/268/Bildungssystem+Schweiz.html

3 Literacy Performance Data

3.1 PISA-Findings for Switzerland

PISA 2000–2012: The Main Findings on the Literacy of Young Adults

The study «Programme for International Student Assessment» commissioned by the OECD records the abilities of 15-year-olds from different states in a three-year cycle. In each cycle, a domain was foregrounded; in 2000 and 2009 it was reading competence. This is defined by the PISA study as «a person's ability to understand written texts, to use, to reflect on and to deal with them in order to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential and to participate in society».³⁶

Although writing is as much a part of literacy as reading, it is rarely considered in large-scale studies since it is expensive to collect and to analyse.

Box 10: PISA 2000–2012

Findings


Some of the key findings of the PISA reading tests are summarised in Table 1 below.

☐ **Slight improvement.** As the first row of data shows, over time youngsters in Switzerland have improved slightly in their achievements (from 494 to 509 points). PISA has translated the results of the tests into «competence levels». Those who do not reach stage II are part of the risk group: the reading comprehension of this group is considered insufficient to participate in further educational courses. At Level II one should be able to extract individual or multiple pieces of information and to make local connections.³⁷ These are basic reading skills. They are considered the basis for a more comprehensive understanding of text.

The risk group has shrunk: it fell from a fifth in 2000 to a seventh in 2012. The proportion of young people achieving basic level (=level II) has remained comparatively stable.

☐ **Reduction of heterogeneity.** In long-term comparison some distinctive features can be observed: The gap between academically strong and weak youngsters has decreased from 335 to 296 points. This means that Swiss schools have been better at reducing the heterogeneity in reading comprehension. Nevertheless, there are still four competence levels between the highest and weakest five per cent of adolescent.

☐ **More equal opportunities.** The following developments are also encouraging: both the effects of social background as well as the differences between locals and youth not born in Switzerland – first generation immigrants, in other words – have weakened. In addition, it has become less important whether the PISA test language corresponds to that young people use at home with their parents.

 **Gender gap persists.** The differences in performance between boys and girls in the long-term trend have remained relatively stable: as before, the boys perform slightly worse than the girls do. The difference amounts to about half a competence level.

PISA-Cycle	2000	2003	2006	2009	2012
Average number of points on the total scale of 'reading'	494	499	499	501	509
Percentage risk group (below level II)	20 %	17 %	16 %	17 %	14 %
Percentage achieved basic level (level II)	21 %	23 %	23 %	23 %	22 %
Distance between strongest and weakest five per cent in points	335	313	311	308	296
Gender (lead of girls in points)	30	35	31	39	36

³⁶ OECD (2010)

³⁷ OECD (2010, S. 58)

Effect of socioeconomic status in points (elevation of scale at increase of a unit related to indicators of social origin)	51	47	39	40	38
Influence of origin 1: locals measured against migrants of the 1 st generation (not born in Switzerland) in points	112	93	85	58	k. A.
Influence of origin 2: locals measured against migrants of the 2 nd generation (born in Switzerland) in points	35	31	48	42	k. A.
Einfluss Sprache zu Hause (Testsprache = Sprache zu Hause spoken at home in points) *	95	84	81	26 (E), 33 (2. Gen.), 71 (1. Gen.)	k. A.

Table 1: Most relevant results from PISA studies in Switzerland, from OECD, (OECD, 2001), (OECD, 2004), (OECD, 2007), (OECD, 2010), (OECD, 2010b), (OECD, 2013), (OECD, 2014)

*** Explanatory note:** In PISA 2009 the three groups locals (E, children and parents born in Switzerland), 1st generation (1st Gen., parents and young people not born in Switzerland) and 2nd generation (2nd Gen., parents born outside, children born within Switzerland) were analysed specifically. This resulted in three different categories while in the first PISA studies only one was displayed. N/A = no available data regarding the effects of migration in the OECD publications on literacy.

3.2 Swiss Literacy Performance data in the European Context

The following figures have been provided by ELINET. Switzerland participated in OECD's PISA (15 year-olds' reading literacy) since 2000. This means it is possible to describe the changes over time in average reading proficiency, according to different characteristics of the readers for that age group only.

In PISA 2012, Switzerland performed above the EU's average (509 vs. 489 EU-average), showing a gradual increase in reading : +7 score points between 2000 and 2009, +8 score points between 2009 and 2012. The difference between 2000 and 2012 reached 15 score-points. Whereas Switzerland performed just above the EU countries on average in 2000 (494 vs. 489), it increased its advantage over time : the difference was by 20 score-points in 2012.

The proportion of students who can be considered as low-performing readers was below the EU countries on average (13.7% vs. 19.7%). These students can read simple texts, retrieve explicit information, or make straightforward inferences, but they are not able to deal with longer or more complex texts, and are unable to interpret beyond what is explicitly stated in the text. The proportion of low-performing readers has decreased (by 7%) in Switzerland between 2000 and 2012. This decrease concerns girls (- 7%) to the same extent as boys (-6%). The proportion of top-performing readers was higher than in EU countries on average (9.1% vs. 7%).

In PISA 2009, the gap according to the pupils' socioeconomic background was higher than the EU average (93 vs. 89 on average). Similarly, the gap between native students and students with a migrant background was higher than in EU countries on average (48 vs. 38 in EU). However, the mean score difference between those who always spoke the language of the test at home, and those who spoke another language was exactly the same in Switzerland as on EU average (54). It should be noticed that the proportion of students with a migrant was much higher in Switzerland than in EU countries on average (23.5% vs. 8.3%).

In Switzerland, the gender gap (in favour of girls) was slightly lower in PISA as in the EU on average (39 vs. 44) but it tended to increase between 2000 and 2012. Whereas girls improved their performance on EU-average by 5 score-points, they show a higher increase in Switzerland between 2000 and 2012 (+ 17 score-points). Boys' performance increased by 11 points, while on the EU level, the trend was different: a decrease was observed (-5 points).

In conclusion, whereas Switzerland performed better than EU-average mainly in 2000 and more slightly in 2009, its score fell below the EU mean in 2012. Both girls and boys show a decrease of their performance whereas the European trend was an improvement of performance among girls. The proportion of low-performing readers decreased between 2000 and 2012 and is now below the EU average. Switzerland shows a higher proportion of top-performers. The gap according to socioeconomic status is higher than in EU on average, which could indicate that the educational system in Switzerland is more equitable than EU countries on average. The gap according to language spoken at home is similar to EU average. It should be underlined that the proportion of students with a migrant status and the percentage of students who speak another language at home are much higher in Switzerland than in other European countries; the results must then be taken with some caution.

Conclusion

Regarding the five cycles of reading skill assessments done to date, the following long-term trends of PISA can be noted:

- + Reading skills at the end of compulsory education have improved slightly.
- + The proportion of weak readers is falling.
- + The heterogeneity of the students gradually plays a lesser role.
- + The effects of migration have declined sharply, particularly in the 1st generation of migrants.
- + The effects of socioeconomic status are declining.
- – Gender differences remain relatively stable, but do not have as strong an effect as family characteristics

In contrast to reading, there is no evidence from PISA regarding the writing skills of young people. However, research results point to the importance of the promotion of writing skills.

4 Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences

This chapter provides an overview of different projects these colleges are involved in concerning research and/or development of literacy. It also deals with the question of to what degree literacy should be included in the (further) education of teachers at universities of applied sciences (pädagogische Hochschulen, PHs) in German-speaking Switzerland.

4.1 Research and development projects

The universities of applied sciences do research and development on the promotion of literacy in a number of different projects. The following overview shows a relevant selection of completed and current individual projects of various Swiss German PHs.

The following list (figure 3) is incomplete: The quantitative distribution of the listed and illustrated projects may not be transferred to the actual relevance or importance of an university of applied sciences in teacher education for the field of language didactics in German-speaking Switzerland.

What it is about

Literacy is being developed and researched in a detailed, multi-faceted and diverse way. Thus, the PHs contribute significantly both to the development of teaching as well as to the theory in terms of literacy.

The following list is incomplete: The quantitative distribution of the listed and illustrated projects may not be transferred to the actual relevance or importance of an university of applied sciences in teacher education for the field of language didactics in German-speaking Switzerland.

Figure 3 visualises the current (or recently² completed) literacy projects in research and/or development at the universities of applied sciences in teacher education of German-speaking Switzerland (and ZHAW).

Key:

Reading

Writing

Oral and precursor skills

Multimodality

Research (F)

Development (E)

Research & Development (F & E)

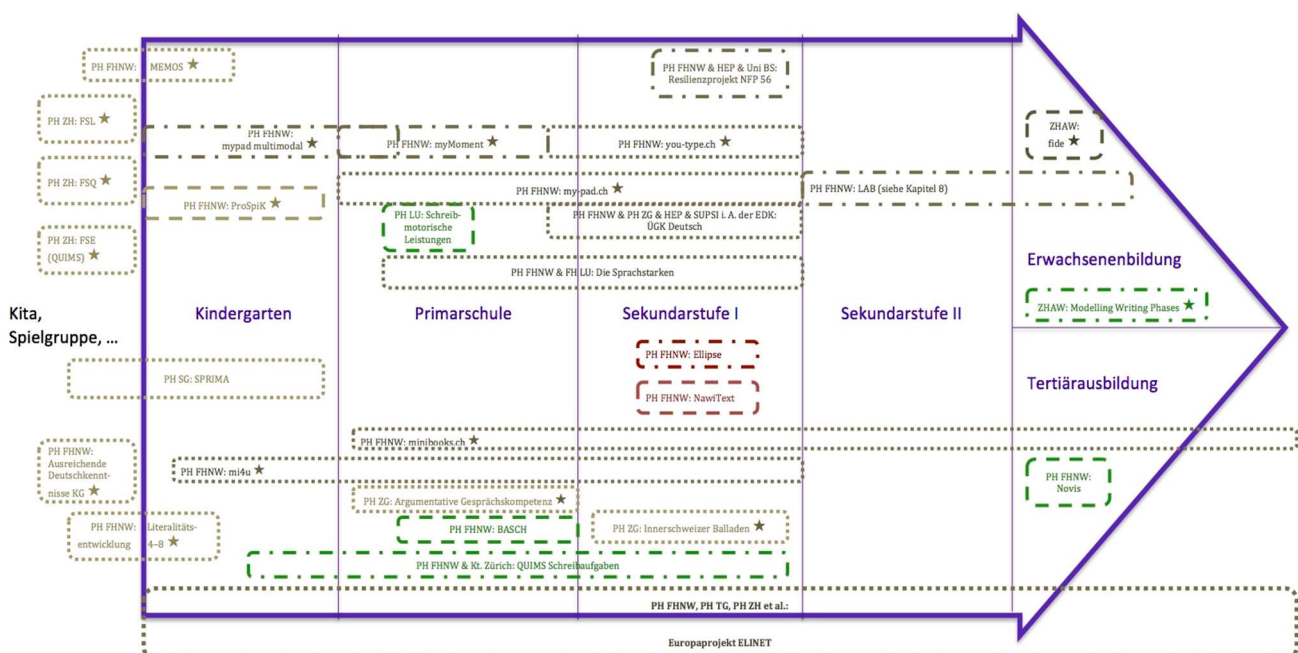


Figure 2: Overview concerning the literacy projects in research and/or development of swissgerman universities i.e. universities of applied sciences.

The graph clearly shows that a lot of attention is paid to literacy in the broad sense of multi literacy with its precursor skills; this holds true especially for early schooling, but also for elementary school (primary and secondary Level).

It is also apparent that few projects are limited exclusively to one modality only (reading OR writing, red or green): It is much more common to tackle literacy multi-modally (brown and beige).

4.2 Literacy in the Training of Teachers

The chapter addresses the question of which domains of literacy are taught in the education of prospective teachers.

What it is about

Competences in literary language are not primarily acquired automatically or exclusively in the family, but rather in the formal acquisition at nursery and primary school. While children in nursery and primary school are taught by generalists, skilled specialist teachers are responsible for the lower and upper secondary school level. Teachers at all levels are trained at universities.

Children need the formal and institutionalised assistance in nursery and primary school as well as the socio-historic experience within their families for the acquisition of written language skills. In Switzerland, the teachers are trained at College- and University level. Teachers for nursery school, primary school and usually also for secondary school level I complete a professional scientific and didactically oriented course of study at an educational institution. 20230% of their training is done vocationally.

For teachers in secondary education, a course of study at a university with a Bachelor's and Master's degree (a total of 300 ECTS) is mandatory, the university usually does not include didactic training. The pedagogical training (a total of 60 ECTS) follows the master's degree or is completed at the same time. This «Lehrdiplom für Maturitätsschulen» (teaching diploma for secondary education) can be attained mainly at universities of applied sciences and some universities.

Information on the education system in Switzerland and teacher training:

www.edk.ch/dyn/13870.php

At nursery and primary school level, teachers are generalists: they teach almost every subject in a class, such as German, math, and music. At secondary level, the teachers are specialised in their subjects: at lower secondary level they usually teach two to four subjects. At upper secondary level, however, they only teach one or two subjects.

What it is about

Literacy is focused on and weighed differently in the study programs at the various universities.

Procedure for data collection: Based on module handbooks and course catalogues available online, it can be stated that the number of courses focusing on literacy varies in the training of teachers depending on the university. Without the vocational courses, the specialised academic and didactic courses the prospective nursery and primary school teachers attend amount to five to fifteen per cent (5-15%) of all courses. Teachers at lower secondary level complete a little more specialised courses, between ten and twenty per cent (10-20%). For teachers at upper secondary level, the amount is similarly high, with about fifteen to twenty per cent (15-20%) within the year of teacher training.

Furthermore, it can be stated that the share of the various literal domains (Literature & Reading, Writing & Spelling, Linguistics) varies from university to university. A general pattern is that the absorbance of texts (Reading & Literature) both in technical science and in teaching methodology take priority over the production of texts (Writing & Spelling).

What it is about

Literacy topics are treated marginally outside of the language subjects and didactics.

Reading and writing are basic skills for all subjects, as there is no understanding in subject teaching without them. However, corresponding skills in the non-linguistic didactics and in general didactics are considered only marginally. Especially the smaller schools for education offer hardly any courses on literacy in non-language subjects. Most Swiss specialist teachers (who have not studied German at university) therefore lack in a sound knowledge on the development and teaching of (written) language skills. Such would be desirable, however, since language, writing and (multimodal) text skills are the basis of all learning at school.

Data and Methodology

Module descriptions and course catalogues from five of the larger universities of applied sciences in teacher education (PHs) in German-speaking Switzerland were analysed for this report: PH Bern, PH Lucerne, PH FHNW (Northwest Switzerland), PH Thurgau, PH Zurich. All their modules have been taken into account, where at least one of the following areas of expertise relevant for literacy is addressed:

- acquisition of written language (reading, writing, spelling, literature),
- language,
- individual support (reading, writing, language) and
- media (if concerned with writing).

Both subject, scientific and didactic, as well as general teaching modules, have been considered. All non- linguistic subjects and the subject of German have been included. On the basis of the number of ECTS awarded for the identified courses, the amount of time a student spends on these issues has been estimated.

An example: The PH Bern offers the seminar «German 2: literacy and literacy learning» for the prospective pre- and lower-grade teachers. This course is credited with 3 ECTS. A total of nine topics are addressed in the seminar, including the following four topics on literacy: reading, writing, spelling, and linguistics. Accordingly, we estimate the proportion of each topic to a ninth of the seminar and thus at 0:33 ECTS. ☐

What it is about

The importance allocated to reading, writing, linguistics, literature, and spelling varies at the different universities.

The module descriptions of the School of Education Bern indicate a relatively detailed literacy programme for teachers: students of all subjects can concern themselves with literacy scientifically and didactically. The School of Education Zurich and the School of Education FHNW (University of Applied Sciences of Northwest Switzerland), on the other hand, offer courses for general language issues and bilingualism to all students.

4.3 Literacy in the further education of teachers

This chapter gives an overview of further education for teachers concerning various aspects of literacy. Legally, the further education is regulated cantonally. Within the cantonal guidelines, the responsibility for the specific curriculum of each teacher's further education lies with him- or herself: each can choose from a number of courses differing in formality and content.

Further education is part of the rights and duties of a teacher and is stated in the professional ethics of the «Dachverband Schweizer Lehrerinnen und Lehrer» (umbrella organisation of Swiss teachers). Guideline number 5 states: «Teachers have a college education, further their education and build their career.»³⁸ Further education remains a part of the teaching profession for the entire duration of professional practice. School management, the community school board and the cantonal Department of Education usually arrange and approve further education. Teachers are encouraged to participate in joint developments with their teaching colleagues and to educate themselves personally in order to obtain an individual skills profile.

Both the University of Applied Sciences and the universities offer a vast choice of further education. This ranges from courses of two to nine hours to certified postgraduate courses (MAS / CAS).

Offers from different universities of applied sciences in teacher education:

- PH Fachhochschule Nordwestschweiz: www.fhnw.ch/ph/iwb/startseite
- Beratungsstelle Digitale Medien in Schule und Unterricht – imedias: www.imedias.ch
- PH Zug: www.zg.ch/behoerden/direktion-fur-bildung-und-kultur/phzg/weiterbildung
- PH Zürich: <https://phzh.ch/de/Weiterbildung/>
- PH Bern: www.phbern.ch/schule-und-weiterbildung.html
- PH Luzern: www.phlu.ch/weiterbildung/
- PH Thurgau: www.phtg.ch/weiterbildung/uebersicht/
- PH St. Gallen: www.phsg.ch/web/weiterbildung.aspx
- ZHAW: www.zhaw.ch/de/weiterbildung/

What it is about

A large number of individual further education is concerned with literacy.

Universities of applied sciences and Universities: All colleges and universities provide further education. Additionally, there are universities, departments of education and private institutions who organise further education (see Chapter 7). The formats are different: some offers of further education can be brought to individual schools as required, while others are available for free registration.³⁹

Different Considerations of Literacy: The universities included in this research offer between 100 (PH Lucerne, PH Zurich, PH Thurgau) and 500 (PH FHNW, PH Bern) courses for further education of teachers each year. The different courses include offers on topics relevant to literacy (such as language acquisition and promotion): at the PH Bern only 3% (or 13 events) of the courses are on the developments of literacy; at the PH Lucerne, on the other hand, 23% concern themselves with literacy topics.

Differently trained personnel: The courses for further education are taught by people with different skills and professional backgrounds: teachers of the respective school levels can be course leaders, as well as authors, librarians, communication trainers or university lecturers and professors.

Different focus within the literal domains: Within the courses dealing with literacy, the different

³⁸ LCH Dachverband Schweizer Lehrerinnen und Lehrer (2008)

³⁹ The present analysis does not distinguish between the two types of offer. Likewise, the duration of the courses for further education (between 2 and 16 hours) is not taken into account.

universities weigh the various domains of literacy differently: at the PH Zurich, the focus clearly lies on GSL (50% of the courses), while the PH Bern offers only one course on the same topic. Here the focus is on reading (67%). At the other PHs, courses on reading are 15-50% of the total number of offers, with the PH Lucerne offering the least. However, the PH Lucerne is the only provider of courses to sensitise teachers from the non-language subjects for literacy, e.g. in the Sec-I-training «Alles ist Sprache 2 fächerübergreifende Sprachförderung in Regelklassen» (Everything is language - cross-curricular language support in regular classes).

What it is about

Postgraduate courses for literacy and literacy-related issues are rare.

At the five large PHs considered for this report, there is only one postgraduate course on literacy («Literale Praxis in Schule und Bibliothek», literacy practice at school and in libraries) and one postgraduate course for language development («Kindersprache», child language) - both at the FHNW. Certificates of advanced study (CAS) on the subject «German as a Second Language» (GSL) can be obtained at four of the PHs (FHNW, Zurich, Lucerne, Berne); the PHs Luzern and Bern offer CAS on general child learning, which include the topic of language and literacy.

Conclusion

Topic related to literacy account for a small proportion in the training of teachers, which is reflected in the courses for further education of teachers. This must be considered critically, as written language skills are the basis of all (school) learning. In addition, it would be desirable for the various institutions to pool their expertise in training and further education of teachers in order to ensure the best possible education.

4.4 Literacy in further training for early education (see also Chapter 6)

Today, the topic of language teaching is anchored in all training courses for early childhood educators, caregivers and nursery school teachers. Language promotion is also the subject of various further education programs for the early childhood:

From 2008 to 2009, the **Zurich University of Teacher Education** was the first to carry out a «**Certificate Course in Literacy**»⁴⁰. This course was for interested teachers of all levels, including nursery school teachers. The purpose was to provide the participants with subject-matter and didactic basics for the promotion of literacy. Furthermore, it aimed at enabling them to carry out projects for the development of education in their schools. The certificate course was carried out twice in 2009/2010 and 2010/2011, after which it was no longer possible due to a lack of demand (time-consuming further education formats such as certificate courses are generally less and less demanded).

The **FHNW School of Education** conducted a one-year certificate course (CAS) on «**Literary Practice in School and Library**»⁴¹ from 2011 to 2013. In addition to the CAS «Literacy» of the Zurich University of Teacher Education, compulsory school teachers and experts from public libraries were trained as «teacher librarians». In this course, the participants were trained to provide media resources for children and young people in schools and libraries, to develop educational opportunities for pupils and parents, to advise colleagues, and to implement projects for the promotion of information competencies and sustainable reading support.

The «**Master of Arts (MA) Early Childhood**»⁴² at the **University of Constance** and the **School of Education Thurgau** is a course of study offered since 2013 that leads to a university master's degree. The degree is aligned to educational science; however, the analysis of process quality of pedagogical interactions (and thus conversations as acquisition contexts of linguistic abilities) plays a central role.

⁴⁰ This course is no longer offered today.

⁴¹ www.fhnw.ch/ph/iwb/kader/literale-praxis

⁴² www.phtg.ch/studium/master-fruehe-kindheit

«Expert Early Language Promotion German» at the Vocational College Basel

The following long-term certificate course is an alternative to the courses offered by the universities of applied sciences, which occupy this field primarily for themselves or in cooperation with universities, and the SIKJM (see Chapter 7):

Since 2009, the Vocational School Basel offers a course **«Expert Early Language Promotion German»**.⁴³ In a two-year accompanying course, specialists from playgroups and day-care centers taught to professionally support children from 0 to 4 years of age in the German language. In addition to teaching events (around 160 hours), the course is comprised of super and intervention groups as well as practical visits. This course is being offered for the tenth time and complements the training of pedagogical experts in the field of linguistic education.

Conclusion

The research and development work at universities of applied sciences in German-speaking Switzerland are widespread. Literacy is being explored in all its facets: the promotion of reading and writing in digital and multimodal environments, school and teaching development, from the promotion of early literacy up to literacy in adulthood. Research and development projects focusing specifically on writing can also be found.

Looking at module handbooks, one gains a different impression⁴⁴: in the (further) education of teachers, the focus of topics on literacy lies in the mediation of receptive actions (reading, listening).

The overview of the offers in early education in German-speaking Switzerland shows: There is a remarkable selection of training courses in early education in general, early promotion of German, and early promotion of literacy, with different requirements for admission (see also SIKJM, chapter 7) and final qualifications.

⁴³ www.bfsbs.ch/weiterbildung/lehrgang-fruehe-sprachliche-foerderung

⁴⁴ Whether or not this is correct in reality cannot be determined by analysing documents of the module handbooks alone.

5 The Harmonisation of Literal Educational Goals

In the following, the individual elements that serve to harmonise the educational goals of all cantons are explained: The Lehrplan 21 (curriculum 21) sets the literal skills to be acquired during compulsory schooling. Following this, the material used in German lessons in German-speaking Switzerland will be presented. Lastly, Swiss educational monitoring, which is carried out to verify the educational goals, will be discussed.

5.1 Lehrplan 21 (Curriculum 21)

What it is about

Based on the constitutional article on the coordination of educational goals and in context of the HarmoS concordat, language-region specific curricula have been developed. The curriculum for German-speaking Switzerland is called «Lehrplan 21» (for the 21 German-speaking and multilingual cantons).

5.1.1 Overview of the Three Language-Region Specific Curricula

In recent years, three language-region specific curricula have been developed for the first time. Especially in the field of language learning, these curricula are based on identical language models. The «Plan d'études romand» (PER), valid in French-speaking Switzerland, has been in use for some time. The implementation of the «Piano di studio della scuola dell'obbligo ticinese» in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino began at the start of the school year 2015/16. The curriculum for the 21 German-speaking cantons (hence the name «Lehrplan 21») was completed in 2015. The introduction has already taken place in some cantons, while it is planned in others; in the rest of the cantons, the decision on the introduction is still pending.

For the current state please consult: www.lehrplan21.ch/kantone

3 Cycles in the New Curricula

All three curricula are designed for eleven years of school (two years of nursery school and nine years compulsory education). They are divided into three cycles:

1st cycle = nursery school (Kindergarten KG) and the first two school years

2nd cycle = the four following years of primary school

3rd cycle = three years of secondary school level I

Box 11: Cycles in the curriculum



Figure 3: Structure of the Swiss curriculum (Source: <http://vorlage.lehrplan.ch>)

Importance of nursery school

Most cantons are required to offer two-year **Nursery Schools**, so that all children from 4 years of age⁴⁵ have access to free and cantonally regulated pre-school educational offers. The children attend nursery school on five to seven half-days per week. As required and depending on the municipality, the children can have lunch at school. Through the current efforts to harmonise the cantonal education systems in Switzerland, the nursery school is being integrated increasingly into compulsory school and can be understood as a institution of education. This is expressed in the combination of both nursery school years and the first two years of primary school in the curriculum 21, the organisational integration of nursery schools into school units, or the three-year training of nursery school teachers at universities of applied sciences in teacher education (cf. chapter 4).

All three curricula define competences that are to be achieved for each cycle. They thus represent the building blocks of such competences during school years. In addition to subject-specific educational areas, interdisciplinary and transversal competences are described. These include cooperation and communication skills as well as dealing with ICT and media.

Concerning the school language, the curricula are based on the same speech act model and educational standards (so-called EDK basic skills): In all three language regions, the focus of teaching lies on listening, reading, speaking, and writing. In the Swiss-German curriculum, these four speech act domains, which are crucial for all subjects, are complemented by the competence areas «language in focus» (=reflection on language structures or grammar and orthography, and reflection on speech acts or pragmatics) and «literature in focus». The curriculum also specifies the basic competences described in the educational standards.

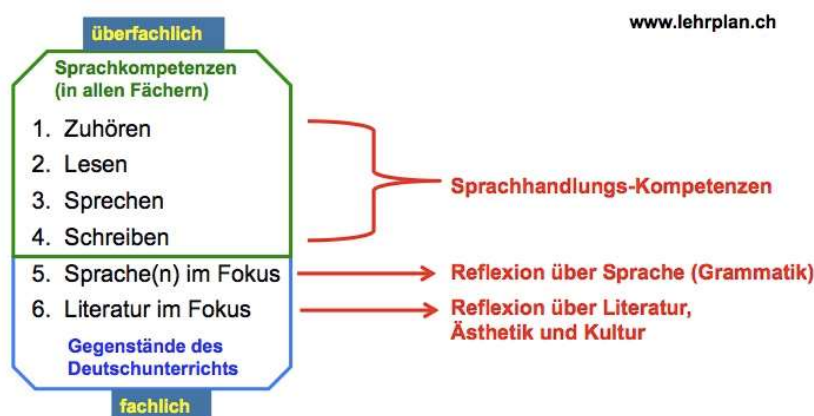


Figure 4: Speech act domain in the Lehrplan 21

⁴⁵ In some cantons, children do not start nursery school until the age of 5.

5.1.2 Promotion of Literacy in the *Lehrplan 21*

This chapter explains the passages in the *Lehrplan 21* which are relevant for the promotion of literacy, or rather for the competence areas «reading», «literature in focus» and «writing».

What it is about

The «Lehrplan 21» is an integral part of the objectives of German language teaching – from the 1st to the 11th year of education. The areas of competence such as «reading» or «writing» are again subdivided into areas of action in which the competency levels to be achieved are formulated for each cycle.

Example for a competence aspect in the «Lehrplan 21»:

http://dedke.lehrplan.ch/lehrplan_printout.php?k=1&fb_id=1&f_id=11&kb_id=6&ha_id=1&k_id=1

The competence area of «reading» is divided into four so-called competence aspects:

- A Basic skills
- B Understanding of subject texts
- C Understanding of literary texts
- D Reflection on reading habits

The aspect of «basic skills» essentially describes phonological awareness, fluency in reading, and receptive vocabulary especially with respect to (written) standard German. These skills are to be promoted in all eleven years of education. The fourth competence aspect «reflection on reading habits» includes the clarification of reading interests as well as reading strategies.

At the core of the «reading»-domain lie the second and third competence aspects: These refer to text comprehension. A distinction is made between the «understanding of subject texts» and the «understanding of literary texts». The understanding of subject texts mainly describes the extraction of explicit and implicit information as well as the understanding of discontinuous texts and is in accordance with the competency model of PISA (see Chapter 3). This competence aspect also entails reading strategies, techniques for working with dictionaries, the use of libraries for the gathering of information, as well as the (written) processing of what has been read (epistemic writing).

The «understanding of literary texts» focuses on narrative texts: its issues are the understanding of courses of action as well as the imagination of characters and locations. Formative reading and the use of the library as a place with a rich supply of reading material (audio books, books, other media such as DVDs and games) complement this competency aspect. Moreover, readers should be enabled to describe their reading interests. The actual literary work with its various classes is portrayed in the competence area «6 literature in focus».

The competence area «6 literature in focus» covers three aspects of competence:

- A Confrontation with literary texts
- B Dealing with different authors and different cultures
- C Literary Texts: characteristics and functioning

«Confrontation with literary texts» addresses two things: First, methods of action- and production-oriented literature teaching, and second, the literary conversation and thus the imagining and the following of communication. The learning about authors and cultures includes the recognition and appreciation of dissimilarities of individual authors and cultures. The aspect of «characteristics and functioning» deals with the awareness of the formal and linguistic presentation of literary texts as well as the knowledge of genres and literary classes.

The domain «writing» is divided into the following aspects of competence:

- A Basic skills
- B Writing products
- C Writing process: finding and planning ideas
- D Writing process: formulating ideas
- E Writing process: revising content
- F Writing process: formal revision

The «basic skills» not only include the formation of a personal handwriting but also the ability to write fluently and to formulate ideas, which ensures the capability for more advanced writing processes. Again, it is implicated that the basic skills should be promoted throughout all eleven years of education.

The competence aspect of «writing products» describes textual structures which pupils should know, so that they can justify their writing goals for their own text production in terms of structure, content, and language.

The following four competency aspects show the writing process, with a distinction between content and formal revision. Formal revision includes orthographic correctness, amongst others. Correct spelling is also addressed in the area of competence «5 language focus» in the curriculum. The two areas are different with respect to the expected depth of orthographic correctness and in the form in which the spelling is taken into account. In the competence area «writing» less depth is expected, as in the production or editing of own texts, orthographic correctness is more demanding than in a focused and isolated exercise for a particular spelling issue. This is also described in the competence area «language focus». In this area explicit orthographic knowledge of rules is demonstrated. The domain «writing» ends with the competence aspect of «reflection on the writing process and own written products». Here aspects of monitoring and writing strategies are explicated.

Conclusion

The language-region specific curricula aim at the harmonisation of objectives for compulsory schooling. The implementation of the curriculum in German-speaking Switzerland falls to the cantons. Therefore, different versions of the «Lehrplan 21» exists and its introduction is at different stages. The common curriculum is the basis for harmonisation in other areas:

- Development of teaching materials (see Chapter 5.2)
- Education and advanced training of teachers (see Chapter 4.2 – 4.4)
- Development of instruments for the promotional-diagnostic performance measurement

The Bildungsmonitoring Schweiz (Swiss Monitoring of Education) verifies the achievement of the educational goals (see Chapter 5.3, Monitoring of Education).

5.2 Teaching Material

The following provides an overview of the available teaching aids and teaching materials for the subject of German and German as a second language.

In Switzerland, the choice of teaching materials is organised by the different cantons; there are no nationally mandatory teaching materials (see Chapter 2). Common to all the cantons is that the selection of teaching materials for the different subjects such as German is regulated. However, the binding character of regulation varies greatly depending on the canton, grade and school subject: while some cantons set mandatory or alternatively mandatory teaching materials, others merely provide lists of recommendations.

Data Foundation

The requirements and recommendations of five German-speaking cantons were examined for the analysis. One canton of each of the five major regions of German-speaking Switzerland was taken into account: canton Lucerne (central Switzerland), canton St. Gallen (eastern Switzerland), canton Zurich (Zurich Region), canton Berne (Midlands), canton Aargau (Northwest Switzerland).

Only the recommendations of the authorities were considered for this report. Nevertheless, additional teaching materials (e.g. from the internet) are expected to be in use in everyday school life.

5.2.1 Courses for First Reading

What it is about

Switzerland does not have nation-wide mandatory teaching materials. The existing courses for first reading are very diverse; cantons give recommendations for the choice of teaching aids.

The choice of teaching materials for first reading is relatively free in all five cantons. While the cantons St. Gallen, Lucerne, and Aargau propose between two to four teaching materials as alternatively binding, the cantons Berne and Zurich leave the selection to the teachers entirely. The variety of choices mirrors the diversity in propagated methods of literary language acquisition. There are textbooks that incorporate synthetic and analytical methods («Tobi Fibel»), some which are more or less closely aligned to the method of reading by writing («Anton und Zora», «Lara und ihre Freunde», «Mimi die Lesemaus»), and still others that are based on the language experience approach by Brügelmann and Brinkmann⁴⁶ («ABC Lernlandschaften»). The textbook «Leseschlau», which has been developed in Switzerland and focuses on intense sound training, is also widely used. The teaching aid «Buchstabenreise», which has been developed in Switzerland as well, introduces a holistic promotion of language skills: It integrates the different methods for writing acquisition; however, the sole focus does not lie with writing acquisition alone. The promotion of receptive and productive language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) and the related strategies are also subject of the textbook.

5.2.2 Language Teaching Materials

What it is about

The language teaching methods in German-speaking Switzerland are competency-oriented and are largely based on the «Lehrplan 21».

The situation is clear regarding language teaching materials. There are three teaching aids which are alternatively binding or binding: «Sprachfenster» (Lower School), «Sprachland» (Middle School) and «Sprachwelt Deutsch» (Secondary School level I) by the Lehrmittelverlag Zurich (publishing company for teaching aids), «Die Sprachstarken» (2nd 2 9th grad) by Klett-Verlag Switzerland, and for secondary school teaching «Welt der Wörter» (Lehrmittelverlag Zurich). The latter is no longer republished and is to be replaced by the more recent teaching aids «Sprachwelt Deutsch» and «Die Sprachstarken 7-9».

All teaching materials are competence-oriented and compatible with the Lehrplan 21 (see Chapter 5.1). They focus on the promotion of all language skills, both receptive (reading, listening) and

⁴⁶ Brügelmann/Brinkmann (1998)

productive (writing, speaking). In different ways, they all concentrate on addressing and reflecting on language strategies such as reading and writing strategies: in Sprachfenster, Sprachland and Sprachwelt, the strategies are listed separately in a book for work techniques for the students and are to be used in the special issue booklets. In the Sprachstarken, procedures and strategies are integrated into the learning tasks and their application and reflection is explicitly introduced with learning tasks. They are expanded in a spiral-curricular way throughout the volumes: the individual volumes relate to one another. Each volume builds upon the strategies, methods, and content brought up in the previous one, and repeats and expands on it in accordance with the competence level of the school grade.

5.2.3 Storybooks and Reading Training

What it is about

In reading and literary lessons, a wide variety of reading books are used at all levels. In addition, individual reading, reading in the classroom as well as reading training in the area of basic reading competences play an important role.

There is one recommended or mandatory storybook per grade:

- «Knuddeldaddelwu» (2nd grade, will soon be replaced by «Das Lesebuch»),
- «Platsch» (3rd grade, will soon be replaced by «Das Lesebuch»),
- «federleicht und vogelfrei» (4th grade)
- «anderswie und anderswo» (5th grade)
- «mittendrin und hoch hinaus» (6th grade)
- «Alles und nichts» (secondary school).

All storybooks are published by the Lehrmittelverlag «Schulverlag Plus» (incorporated company of the cantons Aargau and Bern), which is also part of the interkantonale Lehrmittelzentrale or ilz (centre for teaching aids). Those storybooks contain texts of different functions (entertainment, pleasure reading, information, etc.) and genres. There is a CD and teacher's commentary (including didactic information as well as tuition sketches and materials) for each storybook. ☐

In addition to storybooks Schulverlag Plus also recommends or prescribes poetry books such as

- «Die Welt ist reich» (4th – 6th grade), and
- «Wort und Zauberwort» (secondary school level I).

The teaching aid «Lesewelten» is for the teaching of literature at secondary level. It includes a selection of literary texts and suggestions for lessons. The texts are organised in special issue booklets (e.g. «Literature and Switzerland», «Literature and Suspense», etc.). ☐

However, reading and literature classes are based on more than storybooks: individual and class reading are an important component of reading instruction. The materials on offer are not ☐controlled by the state, but supported by it: full texts, which sometimes include didactic information and exercises, can be ordered for class reading at e.g. Bibliomedia, which include tasks and didactic references. (→ <http://blogs.fhnw.ch/zi/klassenlekture>) (cf. chapter 7). These offers are used regularly and replace or supplement the work with the reading book. Moreover, individual collections from a wide range of novels and textbooks for children and teenagers can be ordered at Bibliomedia. Motivation for reading is thus promoted both in teaching German as well as in the field of human beings and the environment.

Since the results of PISA 2000, the promotion of basic reading skills as well as reading training is of more importance. Learning aids have been developed for this purpose and have been recommended on many cantonal lists for teaching aids.

5.2.4 German as a Second Language (GSL)

What it is about

A Switzerland-wide uniform support scheme for children and young people with German as a second language does not exist for German-speaking Switzerland. The selection of teaching materials in the GSL area is manageable.

The GSL teaching materials «Hoppla» (Primary School), «Pipapo» (Middle School) and Kontakt» are used in most cantons. They cover both the initial instruction and the following GSL lessons. Concerning German as a second language there is no uniform practice on how long students are taught individually without the rest of the class. In the canton of Zurich, for example, they are taught individually during the initial phase. Then they are integrated into their normal class, while they can receive additional language support in separate GSL lessons if needed. Since its implementation in 2013, a possible need for further coaching is determined by the language standard instrument «Sprachgewandt» (see Chapter 5.3).

Conclusion

The situation in Switzerland regarding teaching aids is relatively clear, apart from the courses for first reading. This is partly due to the limited number of publishing companies for teaching aids. In addition, the market for the different language regions are small.

Since 1973 the production and the development for teaching aids of German-speaking Switzerland is coordinated in context of the Lehrmittelzentrale (ilz). 21 cantons and the Principality of Liechtenstein are members of the ilz. Because of the Swiss Standard German (see Box 1), teaching materials from Germany are not recommended other than for beginner classes.

In other words, there is little competition in the Swiss market when it comes to teaching aids. Nevertheless, this lack of competition has not had a negative effect on the quality of teaching materials: those for language teaching have all been developed in cooperation between experts in educational didactics, who are responsible for the conception and scientific support, as well as by teachers, and people from publishing companies. Such cooperation is complicated, but it guarantees that the teaching materials take into account the most recent scientific findings while they also integrate the practical side of teaching.

5.3 Performance Tests and Standardised Tests

What it is about

On a cantonal and national level, TIMSS and especially PISA 2000⁴⁷ caused the desire to advance the development of subject teaching and of schools in general through performance testint.

In addition to class-internal performance assessments, some cantons and regions of educational reforms have established standardised test procedures for the evaluation of performance. These fulfil different functions:

- Tests for the individual, promotion-oriented positioning
- Tests to prepare balanced performance assessment (certification and selection)
- Tests to evaluate the effectiveness of the education system (e.g. PISA)

5.3.1 Monitoring of Education

What it is about

One objective of monitoring of education is to evaluate the effectiveness of the Swiss education system. Different tests (especially German and mathematics) are developed for all school levels and are applied on a cantonal, inter-cantonal in education areas or on a language-regional level.

⁴⁷ Check 5, 2004 entwickelt, Klassenscockpit ZH, 2003 entwickelt

Monitoring of Education

The Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education (EDK) and the State Secretariat for Education, Research, and Innovation (SBFI) have launched a monitoring system for education in Switzerland with the purpose of systematically and scientifically procuring, processing and analysing information on the Swiss education system.⁴⁸ Based on this monitoring a Report of National Education is published every four years (the last report was published in 2014). It describes the entire educational system, spanning from pre-school to university and further education, and includes relevant context conditions and institutional characteristics of all levels of education. Moreover, the performance of the educational system is evaluated on the basis of effectiveness, efficiency, and equity. However, the Monitoring of Education is primarily a basis for research and data-driven education policies of the cantons and the federal government.

Box 12: Monitoring of Education

In 2013, in order to verify the effectiveness of the educational system, the Cantonal Ministers of Education decided to examine whether the Swiss school system fulfils the basic skills (minimum standards) as defined in the Educational Standards (Überprüfung zur Erreichung der Grundkompetenzen ÜGK = verification of achievement of basic skills). Common tests for all three major language regions are being developed to this end (see Chapter 5.3). A database structure for the promotion of the expected basic skills is being built for the same purpose.⁴⁹

Various Departments of Education have commissioned contracts for the development of tests for independent, individual positioning to publishing companies for teaching aids, universities of applied sciences, and universities. The binding nature of the tests is regulated differently depending on the canton. It can be seen that in addition to the cantonal test developments, efforts are being made to design and coordinate the performance tests supra-regionally. Thus, in 2012, the educational area Northwest Switzerland set the goal to establish harmonised performance tests. To date, orientation and comparative tests as well as final exams with the aim of a standardised evaluation of performance have also been established in certain cantons.⁵⁰

The resulting tests «Lernlot», «Klassencockpit» and «eprolog» for levels from pre-school to 10th grade (school years 1 to 12) evaluate the learning status of students in the subjects German and Mathematics. Other tests like «Stellwerk», «Checks» and «Orientierungsarbeiten» assess the learning status of other school subjects and general cognitive abilities.

In school language, the competence areas of «Reading», «Listening» and «Writing» as well as «Spelling» are examined. In part, vocabulary and grammar are recognised isolated from other competence areas. The evaluation processes determine to what degree the areas of competence may be differentiated. Some individual assessments are evaluated laboriously by the teachers and enable differentiated testing of the level of education (orientation work). Others are completed online by the pupils, therefore enabling less differentiated testing. The tests are mostly competence- oriented, as they are currently being based off the *Lehrplan 21* (see Chapter 5.1).

⁴⁸ SKBF (2014: 6)

⁴⁹ www.edk.ch/dyn/12928.php, 30.03.2016

⁵⁰ www.bildungsraum-nw.ch/programm/volksschule

5.3.2 Language Assessment GSL

What it is about

«Sprachgewandt» is an instrument for assessing institutional support in the four areas of language learning.

Since 2013, some cantons of German-speaking Switzerland have recommended (Bern) or declared mandatory (e.g. Zurich, Schwyz, Lucerne) the language level assessment «Sprachgewandt» to clarify

the need for support in language teaching. It is used from pre-school level up to 9th grade.

«Sprachgewandt» includes a standardised reading test and observation sheets on the four areas of language action, which help assess the need for support. The level that must be reached to be relieved from remedial classes may be determined by the cantons. Most cantons follow the recommendations by the authors, namely the level B - C according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), which roughly corresponds to the basic skills in school language of HarmoS and *Lehrplan 21* (see Chapter 5.1).

5.3.3 Other Tests

Performance tests are used not only in school, but also in the process of career choice. Such tests are developed and performed by private providers and can be a precondition to apply for an apprenticeship (Details vgl. Tabelle p).

Conclusion and Outlook

The different approaches offer the potential for a fruitful development.

The coming years will see the implementation of a large national Monitoring of Education in Switzerland in four subjects, including the school language across language boundaries. Its aim is to assess the achievement of basic skills. In addition, there will be different cantonal developments that provide psychometrically validated tests for the schools. These tests are mandatory for all pupils and are a means of control; they are also carried out for promotional purposes. It is difficult to estimate which solutions will be established for which cantons in the long run. In any case, the different approaches offer the potential for a productive development.

6 Early Literacy

The promotion of literacy and language begins long before school; in addition to the locus of the family, it takes place in nurseries, playgroups and generally in places where small children are cared for in everyday life. In German-speaking educational institutions, a situational language education integrated into the everyday life of 0- to 6-year-old children has established itself in the past few years. The focus of the linguistic and literal support is the successful communication through all means available - multimodal and multilingual. Through professionalisation, networking and research, this approach is to be further encouraged and strengthened in nursery schools.

Even small children acquire language and literal skills by communicating with competent others thus discovering, trying and developing (written) linguistic techniques. Caregivers of children (for example parents, siblings, or educational professionals) can support these acquisition processes by creating increasingly sophisticated linguistic action situations and allowing the children an ever more independent participation. The focal point is both on activities directly related to writing (for example «writing» a shopping list, or «reading» picture books) as well as on the understanding and producing of «oral texts» (e.g. experience reports, fantasy stories or explanations). Children from disadvantaged families can particularly benefit from such options at educational preschool institutions. Therefore, the actions of educational professionals in day care centres, home day care, playgroups, and nurseries must develop and coordinate the acquisition of linguistic and literal skills in real life situations.

Situational Language Education

Successful everyday conversations between children and their caregivers are acquisition contexts for linguistic and literal skills. When coaching and training care staff in the approach of situational language education, two dimensions are fundamentally important:⁵¹

- quality of interaction
- challenging language acts

It is always the common understanding, which is in the foreground and which is co-constructed by all means available (multimodal and multilingual). ⁵²

Box 13: Situational language education

Early Literacy

Literacy skills include low- and high-hierarchy dimensions. Their acquisition already begins in preschool:

- The basal progenitor skills include phonological awareness and the knowledge of first letter shapes and sound-letter assignments.
- High-hierarchy precursor skills may be taken to mean oral as well as textual capabilities. Oral texts are individual, globally structured, linguistically differentiated, and exemplary representations of content that is detached from situational context. ⁵²

Young children need access to media (including, but not limited to books), participation in media practices and discussions on media and their content in order to acquire literal skills through model learning.⁵²

Box 14: Early literacy.

⁵¹ Isler (2014)

⁵² cf. Wiesner (2016)

6.1 Changes of the Past Decade

Compared to the official education in nursery schools and schools, the area of early learning presents itself as a very heterogeneous field with various facilities 2 pre-schools, day care organisations, play groups and libraries, as well as community work, religious and ethnic communities or sports and music clubs 2 a variety of learning opportunities for young children and their parents (see Chapter 7).

After PISA in 2003, early language education quickly came into the focus of education policy. Concerning early language education, efforts for its promotion were implemented independently from the PISA study. However, since a scientific and conceptual basis were still missing, the efforts were isolated and limited to the following actions:

- First educational and structure-building measures
- Publication of preliminary research results on the efficacy of good quality pre-school 2 education services
- Expertise and reports for early education
- Creation of additional childcare places 2
- Projects to strengthen early language education and integration
- Creation of an orientation framework «Frühe Bildung, Betreuung und Erziehung in der 2 Schweiz» (« Early Education and Care in Switzerland ») (FBBE) 2
- Continuous quality development of educational institutions in the area of early learning
- Increased efforts to promote reading by libraries
- Formation of a School Entry Level (4- to 8-year-olds, aside from pre-school and school 2 education this also concerns the education of the respective teachers at teacher training colleges) (see also Chapter 4 an 5). 2

6.2 Projects for Early Linguistic Education and Literacy ^[L]_[SEP]

This chapter provides an overview of a selection of works for early linguistic education and literacy. The selection is limited to German-speaking work with a clear focus on linguistic and literal education. (i.e. no longer on early education in general). ^[L]_[SEP]

What it is about

The development projects listed and described below differ in how strongly they focus on the promotion of language and literacy. The only project specifically tuned to early literal education is «Schenk mir eine Geschichte» («Give me a story»). In the other projects, the acquisition of German by multilingual or socially disadvantaged children is at the centre.

«Schenk mir eine Geschichte – family literacy» (see Chapter 7) ^[L]_[SEP]

Spielgruppen plus (Playgroups Plus): For children with disadvantaged educational backgrounds who learn German as their second language. Canton Zurich

www.vsa.zh.ch/internet/bildungsdirektion/vsa/de/schulbetrieb_und_unterricht/schule_migration0/integrationsfoerderung_im_vorschulalter.html

Buchstart Schweiz (Bookstart Switzerland): the gift of a book and parent information on early language promotion as well as events in libraries for children from 1-2 years.

From Playgroup to Nursery School - Spiki: playgroup and parent exchange. Subsidised for low-income families. City of St. Gallen.

Primano: Within the framework of this project, a program for home visits, various support modules for pedagogical experts (in play groups, Mother-Child German courses and day care centers) as well as networking measures were implemented in four districts in the city of Bern. Various elements of the program have now been completed.

Mit ausreichenden Deutschkenntnissen in den Kindergarten (Off to Nursery School With Sufficient Knowledge of German): Free, obligatory visit of a playgroup for children with low knowledge of German. With a complimentary offer for the family. Researched by the University of Basel. City of Basel.

What it is about

In addition to scientific bases there are also programmatic concepts and implementation-oriented materials for early language education, which are aligned with different emphases on a daily integrated language education and which are compatible with each other and with the guiding framework of the FBBE.

Expertise, Concepts and Materials for Early Language Education

Some papers have also been able to contribute to the further development of early language education. The following have recently appeared in German-speaking Switzerland:

Sticca et al. (2013) have interviewed actors active in early education with regards to the efficacy and consistency of language training in the Canton of Zurich and have derived recommendations from these interviews.

Stamm (2014): in her dossier for early language support, Stamm illustrates theoretical approaches and empirical findings and recommends five key elements for the development of early language support.

Schneider et al. (2013): in «Expertise zur Wirksamkeit der Sprachförderung» («expertise on the effectiveness of language training»), Schneider et al. gather the (as yet rather scant) empirical evidence of effective approaches to pre-school language promotion in everyday conversations (in their chapter 4.1).

Kannengieser et al. (2013) present a practical book «Nashörner haben ein Horn» («Rhinos Have One Horn»), which contains practical tips and applications for playgroups and day care centres and which teaches the fundamentals of language support for monolingual and multilingual children aged 2 to 4.

Löffler/Vogt (2015) provide the manual «Strategien der Sprachförderung im Kita-Alltag» («Strategies of Language Promotion in Day Care»), in which five language support strategies, their basics and their practical application in the context of everyday integrated language support are presented.

Kappeler Suter/Plangger (2015): In addition to «Nashörner haben ein Horn», Kappeler and Plangger provide a «quality guide to language training in playgroups and childcare centres» which specifies the dimensions of the structure, orientation and process quality for early language education.

Isler et al. (in Druck): In «Fachkonzept frühe Sprachbildung» («Concept for Early Language Education») Isler et al. describe the state of research, the basic understanding and six guidelines of early everyday integrated language education and their conditions in the family, day family, day care and playgroup.

Conclusion and Outlook

In German-speaking Switzerland, recent years have seen substantial progress made on the road towards a coherent support of everyday integrated language at all levels – development, training, research, and documentation. In the field of early language education many actors at different levels have been working on and dealing with the following elements:

- Measures for the promotion of pre-school reading (e.g. the Foundation GFZ [Gemeinnützige Frauen Zürich (Women's Community Service Zurich)])
- Measures for the further development of early language education (e.g. Department of Education Canton of Zurich)
- Training initiatives for early language education in playgroups (Lead: PH TG).

Nevertheless, several tasks – some of them fundamental – remain to be solved:

- Daily integrated language support needs to be developed with respect to multilingualism and (multimedia) literacy.
- The hitherto selectively acting measures for the professionalisation of educational action must be applied more widely in an appropriate form.
- There are tendencies towards separation between nurseries, play groups, early education centres and nursery schools, which must be overcome by a common understanding of language development and cooperation.
- The coordination and possible cooperation between the universities that deal with the research and development of early language and literacy education should be strengthened.

There is as yet no systematic knowledge about the understanding of early language education mediated in these trainings. A comparative study of curricula and methods would be desirable.

With the **introduction of the Lehrplan 21** many German-speaking cantons face a paradigm shift from a logic of stages to a logic of didactics on the level of nursery school. This bears some risk that the educational understanding of early learning and of nursery school may drift apart instead of moving towards one another, thus impeding the construction of an integrated language education. This challenge may require special attention and support.

7 The Promotion of Literacy Parallel to School

School is far from the only place where literacy is taught and encouraged. On the contrary: the formal literal socialisation and education at school is usefully flanked and supported by extracurricular offerings. In this chapter, both nationally and regionally active institutions committed to the promotion of literacy at different ages are presented. They are active through various offers, among other things through entertaining publishers as well as through prizes and projects in the promotion of literacy.

Tradition of the promotion of literacy parallel to school

Until the end of the 20th century, the extracurricular promotion of literacy in German-speaking Switzerland was closely linked to school and was operated by school-related associations and Bibliomedia Switzerland. There were virtually no initiatives for reading and writing for pre-primary level and the leisure time of children and adolescents. Since PISA 2000, the landscape regarding the funding of such initiatives has changed dramatically. Especially in the field of early learning, projects in favour of the promotion of literacy in families and in early learning institutions (Kitas, playgroups) throughout Switzerland have been implemented. But also the academic field of action has been extended to include services for families and peers to better achieve extracurricular reading socialisation.

Box 15: Literalitätsförderung ausserhalb der Schule hat Tradition in der Schweiz.

The present compilation shows the key players in the promotion of literacy outside school and presents selected offers with a wide reach.

7.1 National and Widely Active Institutions in the Promotion of Literacy and Libraries

Extracurricular Organisation of the Promotion of Literacy

In German-speaking Switzerland, associations and foundations' interest in and support of extracurricular reading promotion has a long tradition. These institutions have usually been founded out of the need to provide children and young people with «good» reading for their free time.

Based on Article 15 of the Kulturförderungsgesetz (Cultural Promotion Act), the Confederation supports organisations and institutions active in the promotion of reading with structural funding contributions. It also supports sustainable individual projects in the area of the promotion of literacy, which are located at the interface between libraries and schools, while taking into account the competences of the federal government and the cantons, with regard to school (see Chapter 2). In order to be accessible to the operating businesses, the nationally active organisations usually work with a central office and language-regional offices.

Box 16: Extracurricular organisation of the promotion of literacy

Die Schweizerische Gesellschaft für Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung (The Swiss Society for Teacher Education) (SGL):

The SGL is a professional organisation of lecturers, scientific staff and assistants at PHs and according university departments (→ SGL online). It represents the concerns of teacher education in Swiss education politics and initiates professional exchanges between the respective universities through the organisation of conferences and the journal «Beiträge zur Lehrerinnen- und Lehrerbildung» (Contributions to Teacher Education). The SGL is organised in different professional groups, notably the «Forum Deutschdidaktik» (Forum of German Didactics, FDD) and the «Forum Fremdsprachen Schweiz» (Forum Foreign Languages Switzerland).

Schweizerischer Verein für die deutsche Sprache (Swiss Association for the German Language) (SVDS):

The SVDS aims to maintain both forms of the German language (dialect and standard) in Switzerland and intends to deepen the awareness of diglossia in German-speaking Switzerland. Among other things, it wants to ensure that schools are obliged to use standard German as a language of instruction. Furthermore, with the magazine «Sprachspiegel» (Mirror of Language) and the organisation of symposia, it significantly contributes to the political and public discourse. In addition, the SVDS carries the sponsorship of the Schweizerischer Duden Ausschuss (Swiss Duden committee), which deals with helvetisms for the editorial office of Duden.

www.sprachverein.ch

Bibliomedia Switzerland: Bibliomedia Switzerland is a public foundation. It is committed to the development of libraries and the promotion of reading. It sees itself as a library of libraries and as an information hub in Switzerland's library landscape. It provides a wide range of current books for children, adolescents and adults in all national languages and in several foreign languages, and promotes reading and the joy of literature. → [Buchstart](#); → [Mondomedia](#). The diverse offers of Bibliomedia are aimed at local libraries, schools and school libraries. In addition, many, even smaller libraries, start projects in their own initiative, complementing the extracurricular offer of literal promotion.

www.bibliomedia.ch

Interbiblio: The umbrella organisation of the [intercultural libraries in Switzerland](#) promotes the exchange of information and experience among its members and interested people or institutions. It also represents the intercultural libraries and their concerns and interests in politics and society, as well as being committed to the support of the promotion of first language. This is done in collaboration with Bibliomedia, the co-founder of Mondomedia

www.interbiblio.ch

Mondomedia: Mondomedia provides a platform for the exchange of experience and knowledge in intercultural library work for German-speaking Switzerland. It organises speakers for further education courses and counsellors who support libraries in the implementation of small and large projects

www.mondomedia.ch

Schweizerische Arbeitsgemeinschaft der allgemeinen öffentlichen Bibliotheken (Swiss Community of General Public Libraries) (SAB):

The SAB's mission is to promote the activities of the 1000 public libraries, school libraries and their employees. It mainly supports: the promotion, education and entertaining of reading. The SAB advances the strategic positioning and development of libraries and raises awareness for their importance for a democratic Swiss society. It co-organises the «Welttag des Buches» (World Book and Copyright Day).

www.sabclp.ch

Schweizerisches Institut für Kinder- und Jugendmedien (Swiss Institute for Media Aimed at Children and Youth) (SIKJM): The SIKJM, which collaborates with eleven partners from cantonal and regional organisations, collects and documents media for children and youth. It examines such media with a cultural studies approach, presents the results through publications and exhibitions and promotes pleasurable approaches to media for children and adolescents (see the projects listed below: Buchstart, Erzählnacht, Leseanimatorin SIKJM, Mein Buchumschlag, Schenk mir eine Geschichte). The SIKJM reports on media for children and youth, on trends and backgrounds, and honours outstanding children's books (Schweizer Kinder- und Jugendmedienpreis; Swiss Youth Literature Price).

www.sikjm.ch

Further information

Bischu: online manual with the aim to support the development of good cooperation between libraries and schools. Bischu provides materials, annotated links to various educational offers as well as handouts.

www.bischu.zh.ch

School libraries: Here you can find the guidelines for school libraries developed by SAB:

www.sabclp.ch/images/Richtlinien_Schulbibliotheken_2014.pdf

7.2 Publishing Companies

The Publishing Landscape of German-speaking Switzerland

Swiss German publishers for children's books (such as Atlantis, Artemis or Sauerländer) played an important role for the German-speaking children's literature up to the 1990s. Globalisation, the strong Swiss franc and fixed book prices have since greatly damaged this area of the publishing scene. Currently, there are three major trade publishers in German-speaking Switzerland (Atlantis / Orell Füssli, Aracari and NordSüd), which focus on and publish picture books and Swiss classics. Additionally, there is the Schweizerische Jugendschriftenwerk (Swiss Youth Writing Group) SJW, which has since 1932 been publishing affordable CYL in all four official languages. The trade publishers are members of the industry association SBVV.

Box 17: The organisation of publishers

Schweizerisches Jugendschriftenwerk SJW (Swiss Youth Writing Group): The SJW is a foundation; it provides children and young people with timely and affordable literature in all official languages and hopes to awaken the desire to read, to provide an incentive to begin reading books and to disseminate information. For young authors and illustrators, it is a platform for first publications. In 2013, SJW-issue no. 2387 «Die grosse Flut» (The Great Flood) by the artist duo «It's Raining Elephants» won 1st prize Grand Prix BIB at the Biennial of Illustration Bratislava (BIB) and in 2012 it won the prize for Illustration at the Children's Book Fair Bologna.

www.sjw.ch



Schweizer Buchhändler- und Verlegerverband SBVV (Swiss Booksellers and Publishers Association): The SBVV is a service company for over 500 organised members, ranging from the neighbourhood bookstore to the intermediate book trade to big publishers. It advocates a national book policy, publishing promotion, fixed book prices and measures to strengthen the retail book trade. Along with LiteraturBasel it awards the [Swiss Book Prize](#) and contributes to the [World Book and Copyright Day](#).
www.sbv.ch

Baobab Books are a specialised body for the promotion of cultural diversity in children's literature. The centre is organised as an association. It publishes children's books from Asia, Africa and Latin America in German. Baobab Books offers diverse activities to promote reading. It publishes the recommended list «Kolibri» (Hummingbird) for children's literature with current titles, which allow for an open encounter with other cultures and show different aspects of cultural diversity and intercultural coexistence. An [online database](#) completes the printed directory.
www.baobabbooks.ch

7.3 Prizes

Book Prizes

In Switzerland with its four official languages, awarding national literary awards is not so easy. Since 2012, the federal government has met this major challenge with a prize concept that takes into account all official languages, but which does not include children's literature. For children and youth literature there is a separate, national prize awarded by two institutions. There are also regional languages prizes. The most important one for German-speaking Switzerland is the Swiss Book Prize.

Box 18: Book prizes in Switzerland

Since 2008, the **Swiss Book Prize** has been awarded annually by SBVV and [LiteraturBasel](#) with the aim of honouring outstanding works and of giving authors the recognition they deserve beyond the boundaries of language regions and national borders. An independent jury honours narrative or essayistic works by Swiss authors. The Swiss Book Prize is worth 40.000 Swiss francs. The prize money for the winner is 30.000 Swiss francs, the nominees each receive 2500 Swiss francs.
www.schweizerbuchpreis.ch

Swiss Literary Awards: The Federal Office of Culture awards an annual «Swiss Grand Prix of Literature» and five to seven Swiss literary awards. Eligible are Swiss citizens or authors resident in Switzerland. The winners of the Swiss literary awards each receive CHF 25.000; their works are then published in Switzerland and abroad. The Swiss Grand Prix of Literature honours a person who has promoted Swiss literature in a unique way. The winner receives CHF 40.000 prize money. In addition to this, every two years a special prize called «Translation», alternating with the special prize «Mediation», is awarded. These are given out by the Swiss jury for literature and are also endowed with 40.000 francs
www.literaturpreise.ch

Der Schweizer Kinder- und Jugendmedienpreis (The Swiss Youth Literature and Media Prize) is awarded every two years jointly by SIKJM and the «Dachverband Lehrerinnen und Lehrer Schweiz LCH» («Umbrella Organisation of Teachers Switzerland») for outstanding literary works for children and youth. It is endowed with CHF 10.000.
www.sikjm.ch/kulturarbeit/schweizer-kjm-preis

The Baarer Raabe (The Baar Raven) is a prize for children's literature and is awarded annually. The prize includes the sum of 4000 Swiss francs and the publication of the work in the form of a SJW booklet with the SJW publishing house.
www.abraxas-festival.ch

7.4 Readings – Literal Animation Focussing on «Reading»

Readings are Widespread and Supported by the Federal Government

Readings by authors in schools are widespread in German-speaking Switzerland and are supported by the authorities. There are many national, regional and local extracurricular fun reading and storytelling events as well as reading promotion offers starting at early learning level.

Box 19: Readings in Switzerland

7.4.1 National Projects

Schweizer Erzählacht (Swiss Story Night): «Same night, same motif, individual design». This slogan has been used for over 25 years, every year on the second Friday in November, at the biggest cultural event in Switzerland. Throughout the country, about 70,000 children and adults in over 500 locations tell each other stories. Schools, libraries, bookstores and various cultural institutions stage the respective motto freely according to their own preferences.

Swiss Story Night is a joint project of SIKJM, Bibliomedia Switzerland and UNICEF Switzerland.

www.sikjm.ch/literale-foerderung/projekte/schweizer-erzaehlnacht



School Readings: School readings take place in all cantons of German-speaking Switzerland. They are often organised directly by the state, or at least financially co-sponsored. They run under the title «Literatur aus erster Hand» (literature Firsthand) (cantons AG, BS, LU, Eastern Switzerland, ZH) and «Literature Live» (canton ZH; soon also in eastern Switzerland for vocational and secondary schools): During a certain period of time up to 100 authors are invited to readings at schools. In addition, there are a few all- season offers, as in the cantons of Aargau («Kultur macht Schule»; Culture in Schools) and Berne.

www.schuleundkultur.ch/109.0.html

Survey on School Readings in Switzerland: [www.a-d-s.ch/index.php?id=528&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=2275&cHash=dafd3662e8d011a33f0fdc5bc110c817](http://www.a-d-s.ch/index.php?id=528&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=2275&cHash=dafd3662e8d011a33f0fdc5bc110c817)

Buchstart Schweiz (Bookstart Switzerland): In the first year after birth, the parents of newborns receive a book package with books and information on how they can promote the language development of their children, so that they can gain access to the world of books and learning. Various materials are available on the website to download in other languages as well. Doctors, libraries, parent counselling centres and other institutions involved in the project can order Bookstart packs, information leaflets and promotional materials for free. Seven years after the project launch, the offer has reached approximately 40% of all families with infants. Bibliomedia Switzerland and SIKJM are supporters of the project.

www.buchstart.ch



«Bookstart» in other Countries: This project is also available in other countries, such as «Book start» in England and Austria. For more information see the projects [ELINET](#) has collected and awarded Good Practice. Projects awarded Good Practice by ELINET



Schenk mir eine Geschichte – Family Literacy: (Give Me a Story) - Family Literacy:

The project encourages parents with an immigrant background to tell stories and read picture books to their children from an early age. Parents are especially encouraged to do this in their family language. Reading animations are conducted by cultural educators and teachers for «Heimatliche Sprache und Kultur» («home language and culture») (HSK), who are trained for this task by SIKJM. The project is currently being implemented in 14 cantons in 17 languages.⁵³

www.sikjm.ch/literale-foerderung/projekte/schenk-mir-eine-geschichte/

Accompanying Research about the project:

www.sikjm.ch/medias/sikjm/aktuell/bericht-wissenschaftliche-begleitung-schenk-mir-eine-geschichte-feb-2015.pdf

bookstar.ch is a reading project for adolescents. Youth juries present their favourite books on the bookstar website. Peers then select their favourite titles of the year. The whole project is presented as a competition with attractive prizes

www.bookstar.ch



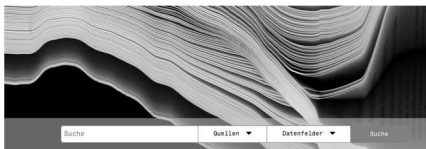
⁵³ Isler/Künzli (2008); Diez/Dreifuss (2015)

Reading Animation SIKJM: Course: «LeseanimatorIn SIKJM 2 Literale Förderung im Frühbereich» (Reading animator SIKJM 2 Promotion of Literacy in Early Stages) and network: «Literaturvermittlung im Früh- und Vorschulbereich» (Promoting Literature in Early and Pre-School Education). Graduates of a two-year course support staff in institutions such as playgroups, nurseries, libraries and family centres in the early literal promotion with further education and coaching as well as providing events for children and parents.

www.sikjm.ch/weiterbildung/lehrgaenge/leseanimatorin/
www.leseanimation.ch

SIKJM also offers further education on the subject since 2006:

www.sikjm.ch/weiterbildung/lehrgaenge/leseanimatorin/



LiteraturSchweiz (Literature Switzerland): This is a meta-search engine for Swiss literature and a catalogue of Swiss books from the last 60 years that are considered worth reading. The catalogue includes children and youth literature, which the SIKJM has recommended. Also found on the literary agenda of LitarturSchweiz is «Wer liest wo?» («Whoever reads where?»), a programme accompanied by internet radio.

www.literaturschweiz.ch

The Solothurn Literature Days provide a forum for [contemporary writing in Switzerland](#), for meetings of Swiss writers from all parts of the country with each other and/or with the audience, with professionals and publishers. There are numerous readings, film screenings and exhibitions. The Solothurn Literature Festival has taken place every year since 1979 on the Ascension weekend in [Solothurn](#); it is the main multilingual literary event in Switzerland and also features a children's book programme.

www.literatur.ch



Vorlesepanther: libraries organise events for children or adults with honorary lecturers on their own premises. Furthermore, they convey the lecturers to other institutions in the municipality (e.g. schools, retirement or nursing homes). The aim is to provide children with exciting, longer, literary texts, thereby promoting their linguistic and reading competences. Further projects of **Bibliomedia Switzerland** can be found on the homepage.

www.bibliomedia.ch

Vorlesepanther

7.4.2 Regional Projects



Abraxas – Central Swiss Children and Youth Literature Festival Zug:

The festival provides a platform for events related to children and youth literature. It invites all ages to the pleasurable experience of reading, listening, participating, exchanging, exploring and reflecting, offering the possibility of an enjoyable, varied extracurricular reading promotion.

www.abraxas-festival.ch

Das Basler Jugendbücherschiff 2016 (The Basel Youth Books Ship) 2016

is an annual meeting place for all who are interested in literature for children and youth. There are presentations of around 2000 new publications, exhibitions and readings on special topics.

www.edubs.ch/unterstuetzung/bibliothek/lesefoerderung/jugendbuecherschiff



The Child and Youth Media Festival Künz (KiBuK) annually offers a wide range of workshops for all ages: readings, concerts, poetry slams and plays.

www.kibuk.ch

Children's Literature Bus: This is a travelling offer by the public library of Basel, with which they promote their educational programmes about media, stories, and reading to children aged between 1 and 12. Reading animators offer customised, evocative book pleasure in different series of programmes. The project Children's Literature Bus is largely financed by the canton of Basel-Stadt and is supported through various donations.



www.stadtbibliothekbasel.ch/index.php?kinderliteraturbus



The KIM Infomobile is a rolling source of information, with over 1000 new books and media formats for children and adolescents. The exhibition car is heated and offers enough space for a whole class.

www.kjm-zh.ch/site/?sCatID=19

Winterthurer Lesesommer (Reading Summer Winterthur): Under this title, every two years a competition is held 2 each with a different theme and logo. Participating children are asked to read stories (or have them read to them) as often as possible for at least 15 minutes a day during about eight weeks and during the summer holidays. The «chosen» days are ticked in the reading pass, a sort of calendar. Children with at least 30 entries can return the reader passport in one of the libraries and receive a voucher for the final festival, which takes place after the summer holidays.



<http://bibliotheken.winterthur.ch/lesefoerderung/auserschulisch/lesesommer/>

MoreChild and Youth Media Switzerland: Eleven associations structured in cantonal and regional organisations work independently or in collaboration with the SIKJM to realise various reading promotion projects.
www.sikjm.ch/ueber-uns/regionalorganisationen/

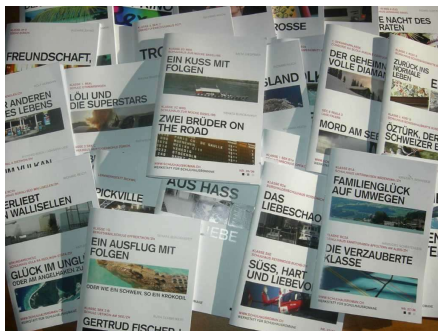
7.5 Literal Projects Focussing on «Writing»

Writing is Also a Part of Literacy (cf. Chapter 3)

Extracurricular offers have traditionally focused on the area of reading. Only for about a decade has a wider definition of literacy 2 as defined by PISA 2000 2 encouraged the focus of extracurricular support measures on written communication and the acquisition of written language skills. These measures are often implemented in the form of writing competitions or offers for participatory writing. Initiators of these projects are often people or institutions closely linked to the world of literature.

Box 20: Writing as part of literacy

7.5.1 National Projects



School Novel: In a fixed number of class visits, authors together with pupils write a fictional text - from the first ideas to the quasi printable manuscript. The writing project takes place in classes of lower performance categories of secondary school level Sek I. The formulated goal is to have a completed version of the text by the end of the course, with which the young people can identify and which they take responsibility for.

www.schulhausroman.ch



Mein Buchumschlag (My Book Cover) is a competition for students from 3rd to 8th grade, who develop the envelope for a book that does not yet exist, but which they would like to read. They invent their book title, an author, and publisher with a publishing logo and design an attractive cover. A jury evaluates the book covers received. The award ceremony has event character.

www.sikjm.ch/literale-foerderung/projekte/mein-buchumschlag/

7.5.2 Regional Projects



JULL Junges Literatlabor (Young Literature Laboratory):

Children and adolescents write literary and other texts. They come as school classes, in small groups and sometimes individually. In this project, young writers are supported by experienced authors. The resulting texts are published (instant prints, books, web, web radio, etc.).

www.jull.ch

The Aargauer Literaturhaus Lenzburg offers writing workshops for children and adolescents.

www.aargauer-literaturhaus.ch



Literaturhaus Basel: Young literature house. There are organised readings and writing workshops for children and adolescents.

www.literaturhaus-basel.ch

Basler Eule (Basel Owl): Basler Eule is a writing contest, which annually encourages hundreds of young people in the region of Basel to create and write stories.

www.baslereule.ch



Conclusion

Especially for reading, there are many extracurricular support activities. Their target group is mainly children and adolescents in the education years 1-9 and in secondary school level Sek I. These offers complement and expand the schools' promotion of literacy at the level of literal animation. They serve mainly as offers for participation and provide a bridge between school and home (ex. Story Night).

Since PISA 2000 a shift has taken place in libraries: Toddlers and small children as well as their parents have been identified as a new target group thanks to projects such as «Buchstart Schweiz» («Bookstart Switzerland»), so that such offers have been rebuilt or expanded on a massive scale.

There is hardly any reading without writing, nor any writing without reading: Increasingly, writing also comes into view - on its own or in conjunction with reading – as a communicative or literal practice. In this context, a gradual promotion of multiliteracy is occasionally taken into account. This element must and will probably be expanded in the coming years. Libraries increasingly become a place for communicative exchange, where all ages meet in a real or a virtual forum.

8 The Promotion of Literacy in Adulthood

This chapter concentrates on the promotion of literacy after compulsory schooling. First, the focus is on the promotion of literacy for adults struggling with forms of dyslexia – in other words, people affected by illiteracy. Then the role of vocational schools will be discussed. Formally classified as secondary level schooling, these institutions often represent the last stage of formal education for young adults, where reading and writing skills may be improved. Of course, there are also numerous educational offers for migrants. However, they cannot be discussed in this report.

8.1 Structures for the Prevention and Reduction of Illiteracy

While federal and cantonal authorities support further education in adulthood, it is mostly privately organised (cf. Chapter 2.2). Regarding the promotion of literacy, the Confederation and the cantons provide the legal framework and finance some of the campaigns for the reduction and prevention of illiteracy. This chapter explains the measures recently developed for the control of illiteracy.

What is Illiteracy?

Illiteracy describes a social phenomenon: people affected by illiteracy cannot accomplish basic tasks in reading and writing despite the fact that they speak the local language and have completed compulsory schooling. They are not able to read and understand simple texts and can therefore not use written information in their daily lives.⁵⁴ They also have deficits in written language, preventing them from communicating adequately in writing. Modern information and communication technologies as well as an increasingly complex working environment also constantly increase the requirements regarding literal skills. In Switzerland, around 800,000 people are affected by illiteracy. They only have restricted access to social life and face a higher risk of unemployment.⁵⁵

Box 21: Definition «Illiteracy»

What it is about

Coherent promotion of literacy in adulthood has so far been nearly impossible to realise. The new Law on Further Education should hopefully strengthen the funding practices in the field of basic skills.

Based on the trend report «Illettrismus – Wenn Lesen ein Problem ist»⁵⁶, the Confederation has initiated a network of actors working in the prevention and reduction of illiteracy. In this context, various measures were implemented:

- The webpage **www.lesenlireleggere.ch** informs readers about projects based in Switzerland and abroad, as well as notifying them about studies and events. The platform also has access for learners who are interested in a reading and writing courses
- Every year, a national illiteracy-conference is organised. It provides a platform of exchange for the actors in the field of illiteracy.
www.lesenlireleggere.ch/Dokumentation.cfm

⁵⁴ BAK (2015)

⁵⁵ Guggisberg et al. (2007)

⁵⁶ Grossenbacher/Vanhooydonck (2002)

Every year, the Federal Office of Culture puts around one million Swiss francs towards the eradication of illiteracy and the promotion of reading skills. The sum is used for structural and project funding.⁵⁷ In 2017, the new Law of Further Education (WeBiG) will be introduced, transferring the responsibility for the prevention of illiteracy and thus also its financial support to the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation SERI.⁵⁸ The Law of Further Education regulates the promotion of the acquisition and preservation of the basic skills of adults, giving the federal government the opportunity to financially support cantonal measures. The aim of this support is the practical teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and oral communication in one of the official languages, as well as that of numeracy and the use of ICT.

8.2 Institutions in the Field of Prevention and Reduction of Illiteracy

The following unions, private associations and universities are committed to the promotion of literacy in adulthood. They offer reading and writing courses for adults and/or establish research and development projects, thus also raising awareness of issues of illiteracy.

What it is about

The prevention and reduction of illiteracy in Switzerland is driven by private and state institutions. Besides raising awareness of issues, their aim is the practical support of the affected people.

Dachverband Lesen und Schreiben (Umbrella organisation Reading and Writing)

(www.lesenschreiben.ch): The national umbrella organisation in the field of illiteracy is committed to enabling adults access to reading and writing, to raising public awareness about illiteracy and to providing the necessary political attention to the phenomenon. The regional organisations «Verein Lesen und Schreiben Deutsche Schweiz» (www.lesenschreiben-d.ch), «Association Lire et Ecrire Suisse Romande» (www.lire-et-ecrire.ch) and «Associazione Leggere e Scrivere della Svizzera italiana» (www.leggere-scrivere.ch) offer local literacy classes for adults.

Zentrum Lesen, PH FHNW (Reading Centre PH FHNW)

The Centre for Research and Development is in charge of the research focussed on reading, media and language at the university of applied sciences and arts FHNW. The aim of the Reading Centre is to support children, youngsters and adults in their language skills.

Projects by the Umbrella Organisation Reading and Writing

- Sensitisation of Educators (g, f, i) www.lesenschreiben.ch/Sensibilisierung.cfm
- Film «Boggsen/Terace» (g, f) www.boggsen.ch
- Project Driving School (g, f, i) www.lesenschreiben-d.ch/myUploadData/files/Schlussbericht%20HP.pdf

Projekte des Zentrums Lesen

- LAB – Literacy in Daily Life and Profession (g, f) → www.literalitaet.ch/
- Illiteracy and New Technology – Learning Writing in Further Education (g, f) → www.illett.ch

⁵⁷ BAK (2015)

⁵⁸ SBFI (2016)

Project «Literacy in Everyday Life and Profession – LAB» – Basic Skills in Reading, Writing and Numeracy

The project «Literacy in everyday life and profession» was conducted between 2009 and 2013 by the university of applied sciences and arts FHNW and the University of Bern. It is aimed at adults with low skills in reading, writing and numeracy, who cannot meet the requirements of everyday life and profession. The aim of the project was to promote the basic skills of these adults, so that they could participate in regular further training. To that purpose, a web-based teaching and learning platform (with the domains of reading, writing, numeracy, ICT skills and individual learning) was established, together with the development of a competence grid and diagnostic tools for assessing levels of learning. These materials and instruments were used in further education and other courses and were scientifically evaluated, following two lead questions:

1. Which obstacles to learning do adults meet in literacy courses and which forms of learning do they choose?
2. Which reasons lead to an early departure or an over-long retention time in literacy courses?

www.literalitaet.ch

Box 22: LAB – Basic skills in Reading, Writing and Numeracy

Schweizerischer Verband für Weiterbildung SVEB (Swiss Federation for Adult Learning SVEB):

SVEB campaigns for further education in Switzerland and advocates high quality standards of courses as well as a perfect network of all actors involved.

Projects by the SVEB

- GO2 – Promotion of basic skills at the workplace (g, f)
www.alice.ch/de/sveb/projekte/foerderung-von-wenig-qualifizierten/go2/
- ich-will-wählen.ch – Promotion of political participation of people affected by illiteracy (g, f, i)
www.alice.ch/de/sveb/projekte/abgeschlossene-projekte/foerderung-von-wenig-qualifizierten/ich-will-waehlen/

Bibliomedia Switzerland: This public foundation is committed to the development of libraries and the promotion of reading skills. Its services are aimed at local libraries, schools and school libraries. It sees itself as a «library of libraries» and as an information hub in Switzerland's library landscape. The foundation is supported by the federal government, the cantons, and the municipalities (see Chapter 7).

Project by Bibliomedia

Travelling exhibition on the theme «Lese- und Schreibschwäche oder Illettrismus» (g)

www.bibliomedia.ch/de/angebote/ausstellungen.asp?navid=14

8.3 Vocational Schools

In Switzerland, the dual vocational training system is well established: upon completion of compulsory schooling, two-thirds of young adults choose basic vocational training.⁵⁹ This chapter describes the various efforts taken to promote literacy at vocational schools.

What it is about

In vocational training, the promotion of literary education is based on general education, individual support courses and within the framework of school-based projects.

Regardless of which basic vocational training has been chosen, all learners have to take the subject «General Education» at their vocational school, where the focus is on language and communication along with issues such as law, politics, culture, ethics, etc. Here language is not only the instrument to discuss social issues; it is also a learning object in its own right. The focus is on the promotion of communicative language skills, so that students are able to use language competently in personal,

⁵⁹ SBFI (2015: 4)

professional and social contexts.⁶⁰ The curriculum applies to all two-, three- and four-year courses of basic vocational training, so it sets educational targets for all learners.⁶¹

Most vocational schools offer remedial courses for students who struggle with job specific subjects or general education because of language deficits. These options are partly aimed at young people with an immigrant background (GSL, DaZ), partly at German-speaking learners with a need for additional support. These remedial courses for German often include the domains of text comprehension (for specialised subject lessons), written expression, spelling and grammar. Although some vocational schools assess the language and mathematical skills of their students at the beginning of training and accordingly define corrective measures (see box 23), there is no systematic language support framework for vocational schools.

Diagnostic Procedures and Support Frameworks – an Example

The Gewerblich-industrielle Berufsfachschule Liestal (commercial-industrial vocational school Liestal) (GiBL) assesses all learners within the first ten weeks of their training through an initial diagnostic evaluation: this concept of early detection allows to judge the learners' basic skills in language and mathematics, as well as their learning and social behaviour.

If performance deficits and learning problems are detected, remedial courses are recommended to the affected learners. The so-called «combi courses» not only teach language skills, but also help with mathematics and learning techniques.

Learners are supported individually in these courses. Thus, they practice text comprehension by, for example, practising with texts from school courses, which they need to have read and understood for their specialised subject lessons.⁶²

At vocational schools efforts to promote reading are being, and have been, made, both in individual projects such as «Sprachlich fit – ich mache mit» (linguistically fit – I'm in) at the vocational school «Gesundheit und Soziales» (Health and Welfare) in Brugg, which envisions language training in all training situations,⁶³ or through reading support frameworks such as the didacticising of texts in vocational training.⁶⁴ Since 2016 the federal government has begun to increasingly support individual projects that focus on the promotion of reading among young people in transition to vocational school.⁶⁵ Bibliomedia Switzerland offers additional support to the vocational schools by providing them with books.

Conclusion

By now, there are several opportunities to improve literal skills for adults who, despite having received school education, experience problems with reading and writing. However, the struggle against illiteracy is a difficult one because further education in Switzerland was previously regulated differently by individual cantons. Now that further education is to become part of the Federal Constitution, the prevention and reduction of illiteracy will be embedded in the newly developed legal frames of the Law of Further Education, which are to support the promotion of literacy in adulthood, especially financially: this marks another major step towards a coherent approach to the problem. Nevertheless, the question as to which forms of support demonstrate an enduring positive effect remains to be researched.

Equally, the promotion of literacy within the vocational schools is not regulated by the Federal Government, but handled differently from school to school. Here, the attention is mainly aimed at the importance of language skills for professional learning and for learning and working in a company. This means: the need for the promotion of literacy has been recognised at vocational schools, which is why various projects have been developed in order to further the promotion of literacy.

⁶⁰ Schneider (2014)

⁶¹ Bundesamt für Berufsbildung und Technologie BBT (2006)

⁶² Schneider 2014

⁶³ www.bfgs.ch/Jahresmotto.360.0.html

⁶⁴ Nodari/Schiesser (2006)

⁶⁵ BAK (2016)

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11 Appendix

Canton	Abbreviation	Languages g = swissgerman/german f = french i = italian r = romansh
Aargau	AG	g
Appenzell Ausserrhoden	AR	g
Appenzell Innerrhoden	AI	g
Basel-Land	BL	g
Basel-Stadt	BS	g
Bern	BE	g, f
Fribourg, Freiburg	FR	f, g
Fribourg	FR	f, g
Genève [Genf]	GE	f
Glarus	GL	g
Graubünden Grischuns Grigioni	GR	g, r, i
Jura	JU	f
Luzern	LU	g
Neuchâtel [Neuenburg]	NE	f
Nidwalden	NW	g
Obwalden	OW	g
St.Gallen	SG	g
Schaffhausen	SH	g
Schwyz	SZ	g
Solothurn	SO	g
Thurgau	TG	g
Ticino [Tessin]	TI	i
Uri	UR	g
Vaud [Waadt]	VD	f
Valais, Wallis	VS	f, g
Zug	ZG	d
Zürich	ZH	d

table «the 26 cantons in Switzerland»: 23 cantons and 3 cantons, each consisting of two half-cantons (AI+AR, BS+BL; NW+OW)