

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1964)

**Heft:** 1457

  

**Artikel:** Swiss education and vocational training

**Autor:** [s.n.]

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694134>

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# The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED IN 1919 BY PAUL F. BOEHRINGER.

## The Official Organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain

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Telephone: CLERKENWELL 2321/2.

Published Twice Monthly at 23, LEONARD STREET, E.C.2.

Telegrams: FREPRINCO, LONDON.

Vol. 50. No. 1457

FRIDAY, 26th JUNE 1964

## SWISS EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Switzerland's reputation with regard to education and training stands high in the world. The American Admiral H. G. Rickover, "father" of the atomic submarine and expert on education, visited Swiss schools last summer. On leaving a small country school he said: "I envy you for the privilege of going to school in such a beautiful country and for the opportunity of getting such an outstanding education as the Swiss one". Subsequently, he published a book called "Swiss schools and ours: why theirs are better". He mentioned in particular two points, the spirit of democratic responsibility, discipline and tolerance which are fashioned in school. The second point he made was the co-ordinating influence of the Swiss matriculation system which ensures an even standard of education for the future university student. This by no means indicates that all is well. It is true that the state schools are excellent. But there is a shortage of qualified teachers in Switzerland. The special federal commission investigating the shortage of intake into the professions, estimates that by 1970 Switzerland will be short of 230 grammar school teachers (*Gymnasiallehrer*), 3-400 doctors, 750 dentists, 190 veterinary surgeons and 400 ministers of religion. There is a large potential in Switzerland, a reservoir of talent which has not yet been tapped. Large reserves may be latent among manual workers, employees, the farming population and women. The percentage of female university students is still one of the lowest in Europe, higher only than in Albania and Spain. Incidentally, in U.S.A., Russia and Japan the *per capita* index of university students (age 20-29) is twice that of Switzerland.

Yet the number of schoolchildren in the higher classes has increased by two-thirds between 1950 and 1961. The military selection authorities divide the recruits into five categories: 1) students, teachers and others with matriculation certificate, 2) commercial employees, office staff, SBB and PTT officials, 3) skilled workmen, artisans and tradesmen, 4) farmers and students at agricultural and dairy colleges, 5) unskilled men. Between 1952 and 1962, the number of the first and third categories have increased considerably, whereas the share in categories 4 and 5 have gone back, the farmers deplorably from 13.5 to 8%, the unskilled workers from 18.5 to 11% (the foreign workman has taken his place!).

The Confederation has been furthering vocational training in trade, industry and commerce by grants ever since 1884. The relevant constitutional article of 1908 empowered the state to work out uniform regulations. The first war delayed legislation, and it was not until June 1930 that the Bill on vocational training was passed and became valid on 1st January 1933. This proved an excel-

lent basis for building up a comprehensive training system. By the end of 1961, the Federal Department for Public Economy had issued 162 decrees concerning a total of 238 occupations. The Bill of 1930 also allowed for grants for vocational guidance, a service which has become ever more widespread.

In 1963, 68% of all boys and 33% of all girls leaving school entered a legalised apprenticeship as against 42% and 18% respectively in 1935/39. 26,006 male and 10,010 female apprentices sat for their final examinations, an increase of 7.1% over the previous year. 95% passed. 628 girls were examined in domestic science in agricultural households and 2,385 in non-rural homes.

The study of development in university education shows that at the end of 1961 there were 28 students for every 10,000 inhabitants. In 1930 only 15, in 1950 already 26. The increase has thus been much smaller during the last decade. At the moment it is only 1.5%. In 1962, of the 15,000 university students, 6,000 were foreigners. Peter Duerrenmatt, in an article in the "Basler Nachrichten" in July 1963, called "Stark im Fleisch", maintains that with the easy money available at a young age, there is not much attraction in often less lucrative intellectual study. Whilst much can be done by scholarships and other assistance, the real root of the trouble, he says, is disinterestedness. A real change of attitude will be necessary to induce the desire for higher education.

It has been found in recent years that modern youth is less able to achieve maximum results and that their powers of concentration have deteriorated. Technical progress has opened the young mind to superficial acceptance of many influences. They go from one job to another, from one occupation to the next. In the finals for medicine in 1962, there was an increase of candidates of 7.8%. The number of failures, however, went up by 18.3%. Yet it has been established that it is not intelligence or talent which have declined, but rather that there has been a change of interest. Man of our time is slave to material matter, and concrete values are closer to him than intellectual pursuits and abstract theory. The conjugation of a Latin verb seems beyond the power of a reasonably bright boy, but he learns to drive the car in a few hours and is quick in the uptake where money matters are concerned!

At a recent dinner given by the Council of the N.S.H. in London, Dr. A. Leuzinger, Director of the "Gewerbeschule" St. Gall, stated that the Swiss schools had reversed the usual process of first educating the man and then training him for an occupation. He said too much stress was put on vocational training at an early age and not enough

on character development. Much of that Dr. Leuzinger put down to lack of qualified teachers. The best of them were often those who had been in other occupations previously. The same theory was expounded by the English education expert Sir John Newsom, C.B.E., at a recent meeting organised by the Christian Frontier Council in London.

Many of the Cantons and Communes lack funds to help poorer teenagers to go in for higher education. In Basle, percentage-wise, four times as many youngsters find their way into university than in Glarus, and an even stronger contrast exists between town and mountain Canton. It has been realised that it is not only unfair that youth in financially weak Cantons should be handicapped by insufficient training facilities, but also a bad mistake. The first step to remedy the matter was the constitutional article on scholarships, which the electorate accepted by a large majority (1:3½) early last December. Barely a fortnight later, the Federal Home Office issued a draft Bill regarding subsidies for scholarships in the Cantons. Switzerland, it must be remembered, has 25 different cantonal school organisations, though there has been an increasing tendency to harmonise methods in the various Cantons. Generally, between 25 and 30% of the total expenditure in the Cantons go to education and training.

The Confederation's expenditure on vocational training rose from 6.9 million francs in 1936 to 9.5 million in 1946 and to 26.6 million francs in 1961. In 1962, the Confederation gave subsidies to 275 trade and craft schools, 158 commercial training schools, 10 technical colleges, 6 universities — a total of 21½ million francs. In addition, over 4 million were granted towards adult education and domestic science schools and for 4,863 voluntary courses on housewifery for women and girls. These sums make no mention of several millions spent on the Confederation's own university, the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH). With the new legislation regarding scholarships and vocational training established, Confederation and Cantons will have to bear increased expenditure for education and training in the future.

On 23rd October, the Federal Council issued to Parliament the draft of a new article on vocational training to replace that of 1930. The old one was no longer adequate in view of the much changed structure of occupations, the altered economic conditions and the steady progress in technical and scientific development. The proposed changes concern the vocational apprenticeship, examinations in various occupations (expert and master qualifications — the master certificate is still a much sought-after paper), adult education, degrees obtained at technical colleges, extension of the number of subsidised training establishments and increased grants in general.

The draft was accepted by Parliament in September. But the federation of technicians and graduates of technical colleges opposed a single item in the new draft concerning the terms "Ingenieur-Techniker HTL" (Höhere Technische Lehranstalten) and "Architekt-Techniker HTL". The Referendum (with 35,234 signatures) was launched, and the whole excellent proposal was jeopardized by a minority as the whole Bill had to be put before the electorate, not only the item in question. The voting campaign was consequently fought for the excellence of the new law rather than against the opponents.

On 24th May, the Swiss citizens went to the poll for the 207th time since 1848 in a federal matter. The participation was low, 35.6% only. The highest was in Aargau with 74.4% and Schaffhausen with 67.3%, and the lowest

was in Geneva with 12.6% and Vaud 15%. The total: 374,823 ayes and 171,543 nays, with each Canton accepting.

Thus the way is now clear for even more intensive vocational training in Switzerland. Together with the new scholarship legislation it should be possible to lessen the shortage in the professions and to secure a steady and sufficient intake of well-trained men and women into commerce, trade, industry and agriculture. Spiritual reserves must be tapped and latent talents brought to the fore. But at the same time a change in attitude towards higher education is essential. Once the realisation of its preference over early material gains has been established, Switzerland will be able to keep her position in an integrated Europe, and Admiral Rickover's words will become truly applicable once more.

*(Apart from sources already mentioned, this article is based on news received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse, "Echo" and "Schweiz. Kaufmännisches Zentralblatt".)*

## 150 YEARS SINCE GENEVA'S ENTRY INTO THE CONFEDERATION

A century and a half have gone past since the ships of the federal allies tied up at the Port Noir in Geneva, and the City of Geneva was admitted into the Confederation.

The date of 1st June 1814 takes a special place in the history of Geneva. It is the day on which federal troops reached the city of Calvin to demonstrate their friendship and sympathy. It was the first time after sixteen years of occupation by the French and much suffering, oppression and degradation that the town could breathe again. This date was more important in Geneva's history than the actual date of entry into the Confederation on 19th May 1815.

Celebrations of this jubilee event began on the last Sunday in December 1963. For it was on 31st December in the year 1813 that 12,000 Austrians marched into Geneva and drove away the French — the beginning of liberation.

On 30th and 31st May this year, Geneva celebrated the anniversary with great festivities under the motto of "Geneva-Switzerland 1814-1964". The weather was magnificent, and the whole town went gay — as John Steel said in the "Daily Telegraph": "... the severe Genevan Reformer Calvin who died four hundred years ago, would not have approved the celebrations. . . . The festivities and galas would have given the greatest pain to him and the other Reformation leaders who in the sixteenth century thundered against Rome".

Needless to say, there were solemn moments, too, in the celebrations. There were church services everywhere on Sunday, and all the bells of the town tolled simultaneously. There were picturesque processions largely of historic character, and, like 150 years ago, a Fribourg and a Solothurn contingent, ninety and sixty strong respectively, landed at the Port Noir where they were welcomed by a 22-gun salute. At the main ceremony the President of the Confederation addressed the huge crowd, and members of the Government, Parliament and many high officials were among the guests. Special plays and pageants were performed, and at the Musée Rath there was a historic exhibition.

*(Based on "Basler Nachrichten", A.T.S. and S.N.T.O. news.)*