

EU Project: Professionalization of Literacy and Basic Education – Basic Modules for Teacher Training: TRAIN

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE FIELD OF LITERACY AND BASIC EDUCATION

Country report Switzerland

Summary

1. General description of the situation regarding professionalisation of basic skills teachers

The results of the IALS Study, and more recently in the ALL-Study, showed, that as many other countries in Europe also Switzerland faces a major literacy problem: 800'000 Swiss, i.e. 16% percent of Adult population, have literacy skills at a most rudimentary level. And it is estimated that only a fraction of 3'000 adults attend a literacy class: The problem is big, participation is very low.

A national report published by the Swiss government in 2003 established the basis for the constitution of a national network to fight illiteracy. The goals of network, which now works under the auspices of the federal ministry of culture, are twofold:

1. to share knowledge amongst all those involved in the fight against illiteracy
2. the improvement of the quality of the services provided to Adults with low literacy skills.

Discussions in Switzerland showed that the second goal could only be attained through a professionalisation of the literacy field, in particular in the field of the literacy teachers.

Subsequent research undertaken showed that in the German speaking part of Switzerland no standardized or formal teacher training to acquire the specific competences needed to teach Adults with literacy problems was available. Moreover, no standardized qualification framework for literacy teachers in Switzerland was in place. There was a lack of clarity on appropriate qualifications for literacy practitioners.

As a consequence, in 2004 the Swiss Ministry of culture initiated (and financed) a 4-year-project to foster professionalisation in the literacy field. A first step, a teaching qualification framework for literacy teachers was to be defined and validated by a national expert group; and a modular training course for teachers, leading to the protected certificate "LiteratorIn", was to be developed, tested and evaluated. A second element of a new professional system was to be a formal recognition process to validate competencies for practitioners in the literacy field.

A further branch or sign of "professionalisation" of the field was the development of a one-day course for literacy facilitators.

Today, the course for literacy teachers has been carried out successfully and more accomplishments are planned. Nevertheless Switzerland is not yet in a position to say that there is "professional system" in place. So far, the standards developed are not overarching and still there are no accreditation of qualification required for practitioners working in the literacy field.

Although there was made a start with the development of a modular training course, professionalisation in the field of literacy teachers is still at an early stage. A lot remains to be done.

2. National professionalisation policy / program

Description	Professionalisation through <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the definition of a qualification framework for literacy teachers • development of modular training courses for literacy teachers, conveying the competences defined. • Competence assessments and recognition of prior learning for literacy teachers
Priorities / Aims / goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement of quality of teaching • Strengthening of the situation of today's practitioners • Collection of Know-How in the field • Recruitment of new staff
Target group(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary target group: literacy teachers • Second target group: Facilitators like social workers
time span	Program / Project started in 2004, it ends 2008
financial resources	200'000 CHF, i.e. 125'000 Euros

3. Current situation for literacy trainers / practitioners

Most literacy teachers in Switzerland today are primary school teachers (pedagogues), speech therapists or dyslexia specialists. Most of them have additional qualifications in Adult education. They come from various backgrounds and thus had to acquire the competences needed to work with illiterates from diverse resources. Those working in the field today work highly professional.

As funding for literacy work is very limited in general, there is no full time permanent positions for adult literacy teachers. Literacy teachers in Switzerland are part-timers and there is no career progression for them at all. Salaries vary from institution to institution and some practitioners work even on a volunteer (unpaid) basis (This is especially true for the western part of Switzerland).

As already mentioned, there are only very few literacy classes in Switzerland and the demand for new literacy practitioners is very low. As long as there is no national promotion campaign to raise the level of participation, the situation for literacy teachers will hardly improve.

4. Description of Best Practice / literacy teacher course

Name	LiteratorIn für Muttersprache
target groups	Target group of the course are Adult educators that already have experiences in teaching adults and that wish to work with literacy classes. Applicants should have a SVEB 1 certificate, which is the basic formal AL qualification in Switzerland.
duration	3 modules (modul 2 is split up into 2a and 2b) 4 days per modul, 12 days in total
qualification/level	The „Literator“ is an additional qualificaton to the basic AL

	qualification required in Switzerland to work in AL
Goal	<p>After having attended the course, the Literator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has a deep understanding of the causes and effects of literacy problems • is fully able to teach Reading and Writing classes for adults • has a broad understanding of the “target group”, i.e. adults with basic skills problems.
content (broadly)	<p>Module 1: Introduction: Literacy in the (inter-)cultural context Module 2: Methods Module 3: planning and steering learning processes and steered learning</p>

5. Competences – Framework

Professional competences, such as

- Ability to teach reading and writing to Adults with adequate methods and didactics
- Ability to understand the target group, i.e. the cultural and social background of the learner
- Ability to understand the broader social and economical context of literacy.

Methodical skills, such as

- Ability to recognize, to use and to manage diversity among learner groups in order to strengthen the particular learner and to improve the mutual acceptance of the learners.
- Ability to organize a learning environment that is suitable and supportive of the learners' needs
- Knowledge of different approaches and methods of literacy language acquisition
- Knowledge of and the ability to use learner-oriented counselling models.
- Knowledge of and ability to make use of suitable project work, self-directed studying, PC, learning software and the Internet

Social and personal skills, such as

- Capability of establishing a studying climate based on respect, appreciation and partnership.
- Capability of understanding the problem definitions and difficulties of the participants and advising them solution-oriented.
- Ability reflect and change positively my moral concepts, strategies, cultural stereotypes as well as my attitudes regarding teaching and learning by means of self reflection.

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