

MODERN PECULIARITIES OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING OF FUTURE SPECIALISTS IN SWISS UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract. *In the 21st century, higher education is pivotal for national well-being and global competitiveness. Switzerland exemplifies excellence in this field through its decentralized, multilingual, and quality-driven education system. Governed by cantonal sovereignty and coordinated by the Swiss Council of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK), it balances regional autonomy with national standards. Swiss universities, spanning traditional institutions, applied sciences, and teacher education, are renowned for integrating innovation, research, and practical learning. The Swiss Agency for Accreditation ensures quality, with institutions like ETH Zurich and EPFL consistently ranking globally. The system emphasizes accessibility, multilingualism, and international collaboration, attracting students worldwide. Higher professional education, often privately funded, complements state-funded academic programs, catering to diverse needs. By fostering quality education, research, and innovation, Swiss higher education drives economic and societal advancement, offering a model for global educational development.*

Keywords: *professional training, future specialists, modern peculiarities*

Introduction.

In the 21st century, higher education becomes a strategic resource for improving people's well-being, which contributes to strengthening the authority and competitiveness of the country in the international arena. Today, the indicators of the country's economic activity depend on the effective professional training of future specialists in institutions of higher education. This circumstance makes it necessary to spread the experience of educational activities of highly developed countries of the world in higher education.

Switzerland is just such a country with the highest nominal wealth of the adult population, which occupies leading positions in a number of international indicators: economic competitiveness, innovation and the amount of human potential.

Switzerland is a small country. It was created in 1848 as a federal state by uniting 25 confederated cantons (territorial-administrative units). At the beginning of the 19th century, the population of Switzerland was 1.6 million people, a century later - 3.3 million, and today 8 million people live in the country [2; 4, pp. 365-370]. Therefore, the growth of the population in this state proves its attractiveness for other regions of the world and the presence of sufficient conditions for development.

Currently, there are 26 cantons in the structure of the country, which are controlled by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI). However, each canton creates and implements its own education standards. The Swiss education system is largely decentralized. As noted by M. Hofmann, the strong system of federalism in Switzerland affects universities and teacher education. Except for the two federal institutes of technology in Zurich (ETH) and Lausanne (EPFL), Swiss universities are under cantonal sovereignty and have their legal basis in cantonal constitutions and laws [6, p. 225]. In May 2006, in order to ensure and improve the quality of higher education, new constitutional provisions were adopted in Switzerland, which for the first time applied to the entire state as a whole and all cantons without exception.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Various aspects of the development of the Swiss higher education system are highlighted in the works of such Ukrainian (*O. Ohienko*,

T. Radchenko, V. Soloshchenko, O. Chepelev) and foreign scientists (*O. Kessler, G. Millar, C. Nagele, M. P. Neuenschwander, P. Rodcharoen, B. Stettler, M. Hofmann and others*).

Presentation of the main material. A significant stimulus in the development of the Swiss higher education system was the adoption in May 2009 of the Federal Law "On the Development of Universities and the Coordination of their Activities in the Swiss Higher Education Sector" [1]. Based on the analysis of the articles of this Law (63 a, 64, 66, 95, etc.), it is possible to outline the future directions of the development of the higher education system in the context of the development of its quality:

- development of a unified system of higher education for the entire country;
- creation of united institutions of higher education in Switzerland by coordinating the activities of educational institutions in different cantons of the country;
- increase in funding of universities and other institutions of higher education in the country, etc.

In order to improve the quality of education, the "Swiss Agency for Accreditation of the Higher Education System and its Quality Control" was created in 2010 with 15-20 independent experts. From now on, accreditation of higher education institutions is a necessary condition for establishing "university status", its license to provide educational services, allocation of appropriate federal subsidies [8]. Today, there are two quality assurance agencies registered in EQAR in Switzerland: Swiss Agency of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (AAQ), which develops guidelines and quality standards, conducts accreditation and assessment procedures, works at the international level; Institutional Evaluation Program (IEP), which provides support to higher education institutions in the development of their strategic leadership and potential for change of management within the process of voluntary institutional evaluations [9]. According to the level of implementation of the main components of external quality assessment according to ESG within the framework of the European Higher Education Area, Switzerland belongs to the countries with a highly developed, fully functional quality assessment system. According to this evaluation system, all institutions of higher education constantly undergo an external evaluation procedure by the agency [10, p.7].

A feature of the education system in Switzerland is the absence of the Ministry of Education. Responsibilities are shared between the authorities, small communities and cantons. Instead, there are 26 cantonal directors of education that form the Swiss Council of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK). This board implements relevant federal laws, such as the Federal Vocational and Special Education Act and the Continuing Education Act. Therefore, EDK provides coordination at the national level of state education policy.

Modern higher education in Switzerland has a two-level structure: higher professional education is called professional education, and higher academic education that is called university education. Higher professional and higher academic education are at level 6 of the International Standard Classification of Education. Higher academic education is available through a bachelor's degree or after completing a program of study at a college of higher education. It is provided through cantonal universities, federal institutes of technology, or regional universities of applied sciences and arts, as well as universities of teacher education. In colleges and institutes, students acquire higher professional education based on practical knowledge. It is considered more specialized than the education obtained at the university. Higher professional education and higher academic education are positioned as different but equal educational paths. Higher academic education is mainly financed by the state, while higher professional education is usually financed by private individuals and employers in accordance with the Federal Law on Vocational Education [7, p. 268–269]. Every fourth Swiss receives professional higher education, because it is more narrow-profile and related to future activities [13, p. 38–39].

Swiss university education combines the innovation and practical approach of the German higher education system, the tradition of the British and the democracy of the French higher education system. University education in Switzerland have centuries-old traditions. The first university was opened in 1460 in Basel. M. Hofmann notes that most universities in Switzerland

were founded in the 19th century. Among the new universities that started functioning recently, he names universities in the Italian-speaking canton of Ticino (1996) and in Lucerne (2000) [6, p. 225].

Swiss higher education institutions not only provide high-quality educational services, but also conduct scientific research at an appropriate level and are leading scientific centres in Europe. About half of the teaching staff and students are constantly engaged in scientific research and participate in state programs. Thus, research and development carried out in Switzerland in 2020 amounted to 3.4%, while on average for OECD countries this figure was 2% of GDP. For comparison, the determined indicator in Ukraine amounted to only 0.4% of GDP [12, p. 18]. Consequently, the achievements of Swiss universities are internationally recognized both in teaching and in scientific research. The higher education sector makes a significant contribution to the economic, cultural and social development of Switzerland.

Higher education institutions in Switzerland are divided into *traditional universities*, *universities of applied sciences* and *universities of teacher education*. Every year, about 258000 students enter Swiss higher education institutions, among which 61% choose university education (universities and federal higher polytechnic schools), 30% - universities of applied sciences, and 8% - universities of teacher education. Currently, 90000 students are studying at Swiss higher education institutions.

There are only twelve *traditional universities* in the country, ten of which are controlled by the cantons (cantonal universities), and two are of federal importance (federal universities) – the Swiss Higher Technical School of Zurich (German: Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich, ETH Zurich) and its counterpart – the Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne (German: Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, EPFL). These institutions of higher education regularly occupy leading positions in international rankings. Thus, the ranking of the best universities in the world compiled by the British agency Times Higher Education in 2023 includes 1591 universities from 112 countries of the world. Among the Swiss universities that entered the first twenty are the Swiss Higher Technical School of Zurich (ETH Zurich – 11th place), in the second twenty – the Federal Polytechnic School of Lausanne (EPFL) [11].

The main courses and research activities in these *federal universities* are related to science, technology, mathematics and architecture. While it is also possible to take these courses at a number of cantonal universities, these two federal institutes of technology are the only "A-level" universities in Switzerland that offer engineering courses.

About 149000 people studied at federal and cantonal universities in 2016/2017, of which about 50% were women and 25% received the necessary qualifications in the process of studying at a higher level abroad [5, p. 18].

Switzerland is a multilingual country, where such national languages as German (63,5%), French (22,5%), Italian (8%) and Romansh (0,5%) are common. English is not an official language in Switzerland, but most residents speak it fluently. It is not surprising that Swiss universities offer educational programs in different languages, and bilingual courses are also often found. Such diversity definitely attracts students from all over the world. Thus, a number of Swiss universities in Basel (German Universität Basel, UNIBAS), Bern (German Universität Bern, UNIBE), St. Gallen (German Universität St. Gallen, HSG), Zurich (German Universität Zürich, ETH Zürich) teaching is conducted in German; the Geneva (fr. Université de Genève), Lausanne (fr. Université de Lausanne, UNIL, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne), Neuchâtel (fr. University of Neuchâtel) are French-speaking universities; University of Friborg (English) is bilingual, and in Lugano (Italian Università della Svizzera italiana, USI) studies are conducted in Italian. Most universities offer social, legal, natural sciences and humanitarian sciences majors. All institutions of higher education conduct active teaching, scientific, continuous education and training. The content of educational programs depends on the university. Bachelor's programs are taught in German, which is one of the country's four official languages, while higher-level courses are taught in English [3, p. 22–24].

It is traditionally believed that in Switzerland, economics is best studied at the University of St. Gallen (German: Universität St. Gallen, HSG) in the specialties "International and European

Trade Law", "Development of Business Systems and Processes", "Financial Services and Insurance", etc. Philology and humanitarian sciences are well taught at the University of Geneva (French: Université de Genève, UNIGE, English: University of Geneva, EUG) in the Faculty of Humanities, where philosophy, history, literature, linguistics, archaeology and art history are studied, and the Faculty of Written and Spoken Translation, which specializes in language studies and the art of translation and interpretation. As for those who are interested in medicine and natural sciences, their way lies to the University of Bern (German: Universität Bern, UNIBE, English: University of Bern), where the faculties of natural sciences, medicine, and veterinary science are operating.

Universities of hotel business and tourism are in the greatest demand among students of higher education, among which the most prestigious are the Glion Institute of Higher Education, which has been training specialists in the field of hotel and restaurant management for 55 years, and Les Roches Global Hospitality Education, which is on the list of the 50 best hospitality universities in the world. 89% of graduates of this university find a job immediately after receiving bachelor's and master's degrees.

There are *Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS)*. There are seven regional public universities of applied sciences in Switzerland, which were established in the mid-1990s. UAS's mostly offer full-time bachelor's degrees of three or four to five years. Universities of Applied Sciences offer certain courses for study, namely: Engineering, Architecture, Building and Planning, Chemistry, Life Sciences, Agriculture and Forestry, Business and Services, Design, Health, Social Work, Music, Theatre, Psychology, Linguistics and Physical Education, etc. A large number of higher education seekers choose the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Western Switzerland (HES-SO), which offers 47 bachelor's and 22 master's programs in six faculties, or the Zurich University of Applied Sciences and Arts (Zürcher Fachhochschule, ZFH) to study art, which provides a wide selection of study programs: bachelor's, master's, study programs (MAS), advanced training courses (CAS, DAS), etc. ZFH consists of three state universities: Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW), Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and Zurich University of Teacher Education (PHZH). Both HES-SO and ZFH have more than 21000 students.

About 15% of college graduates who earn a bachelor's degree go on to earn a master's degree, which typically takes about three semesters. UAS programs are labour market oriented, offer a wide range of continuing education and courses that include continuing education programs and lead to a Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS), Diploma of Advanced Studies (DAS) or Masters of Advanced Studies (MAS).

Universities of applied sciences focus on applied research and development in contrast to "top A" universities, which mainly conduct basic research. Today, scientific activity accounts for about 25% of the total costs of UAS operation [5, p.20].

Universities of Pedagogical Education (UTEs) were created in 2001 from former pedagogical schools. They are based on the same principle as UAS: training programs emphasize both practical training and applied research. Switzerland has fourteen autonomous universities of teacher education and two that are integrated into universities of applied sciences. More than 20000 people are currently studying at universities of pedagogical education, among them more than 70% are women.

UTEs also offer continuing education and professional development courses and provide services to third parties. UTEs are financed by the cantons [5, p. 20].

Among the UTEs that operate in Switzerland, we can single out the Pedagogical Institute of Rorschach (German: Pädagogische Hochschule Rorschach), the Pedagogical Institute of Schaffhausen (German: Pädagogische Hochschule Schaffhausen), the Pedagogical Institute of Rorschach Speech Therapy (German: Schweizer Hochschule für Logopädie Rorschach, SHLR), Institute of Ticino (Italian: Alta Scuola Pedagogica Ticino), Pedagogical Institute of the Cantons of Berne, Jura and Natchel (French: Haute école pédagogique des cantons de Berne, du Jura et de Neuchâtel), Pedagogical Institute of the Canton of Valais (French: Haute école pédagogique du Valais, Pädagogische Hochschule Wallis), Pedagogical Institute of Friborg (Fr. Haute école

pédagogique fribourgeoise) and others. In addition, there are two federal institutions that train teachers: The Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Sport Magglingen (German: Eidgenössische Hochschule für Sport Magglingen, EHSM).

Private universities in Switzerland do not require entrance exams, it is only necessary to present a certificate of secondary education. The cost of education in private universities in Switzerland is comparable to state ones, and the quality of teaching is no less high, so the vast majority of foreigners choose to study in private universities in this country. In addition, private universities in Switzerland carry out the educational process in English. Therefore, it is worth taking into account the level of English language proficiency (500-550 TOEFL points or 5.5-6.0 IELTS) when entering private universities in Switzerland.

Private Swiss universities of the hotel business and tourism business and business schools of Switzerland that provide high-quality practical skills and skills in the specialty are considered the most prestigious. For example, the International Management Institute in Switzerland (IMI) offers a training scheme in which a semester of theoretical training alternates with paid practice, when students get the opportunity not only to consolidate their knowledge in practice, but also to earn money. Thanks to this system of education, many higher education graduates receive invitations to work in Switzerland and Europe long before they graduate. This institution of higher education limits the number of students (no more than 220 people per semester) with a staff of 60 teachers and guarantees an individual approach to the organization of education and the signature Swiss quality of education.

Swiss universities do not have quotas for studying foreign students accepted in most European countries (Clausus). In the higher education system of this country, a mechanism for monitoring the quality of students' performance is provided for, although there are no regular sessions. One year after enrolment, students of higher education take an exam in the main subject ("first certificate"), another year - the main exam ("second certificate"). In addition, students take exams in other subjects according to the individual educational program.

Conclusions. The conducted analysis of the organization of the higher education system in Switzerland made it possible to determine its features:

1. decentralization of the higher education system, because Switzerland is under cantonal sovereignty, which is reflected in cantonal constitutions and laws. This circumstance provides an opportunity for the state to take into account regional requests and needs of universities and applicants regarding the diversity of obtaining educational services. The Swiss Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation (AAQ) regularly monitors the external evaluation of the quality of education within the European area. The issue of the functioning of higher education at the federal level is considered by the Swiss Council of Cantonal Directors of Education (EDK);
2. individual and differentiated approach to education seekers when entering universities;
3. the development of multilingualism in the educational sphere, the possibility of studying in Swiss universities in German, English, French, Italian and other languages;
4. wide opportunities for choosing universities (traditional universities, universities of applied sciences, universities of pedagogical education);
5. branching of the financing systems of higher education institutions;
6. internationalization of Swiss higher education through participation in international associations and agreements with partners;
7. higher professional education is being funded by private individuals and employers, while higher academic education is state-funded.

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