

SWITZERLAND

Early Childhood Education and Care
ECEC Workforce Profile

Country report author

Janine Hostettler Schärer
St. Gallen University of Teacher Education
Institute for Early Education 0–8

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Glossary

EQF – *European Qualifications Framework*

Outcomes based (knowledge, skills, competences), eight-level reference tool to enable qualification comparisons between countries.

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/european-qualifications-framework-efq>

ECTS – *European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System*

A system for enhancing student mobility through the Europe-wide recognition of credit transfers and credit accumulation in higher education.

https://ec.europa.eu/education/resources-and-tools/european-credit-transfer-and-accumulation-system-ects_en

ISCED – *International Standard Classification of Education*

An instrument for comparing levels and fields of education across countries, developed by UNESCO in the 1970s and revised in 1997 and 2011.

<http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/international-standard-classification-of-education-isced-2011-en.pdf>

About the author

Janine Hostettler Schärer, PhD, is a research associate and lecturer at the Institute for Early Education 0–8 at the University of Teacher Education St. Gallen. Her research interests include transitions to care, play-based learning, relationships, and professional development in early childhood education. Janine holds a PhD from Canada and is involved in international research collaborations.



Introduction

Switzerland is a federal state with 26 cantons and 2,136 municipalities (Federal Statistical Office 2023a) and is divided into three language regions: German-speaking Switzerland, French-speaking Switzerland (Romandie) and Italian-speaking Switzerland (Ticino). Because each canton and, in some cases, each municipality handles the area of early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children up to age 4 differently, it is difficult to find comparable data and make valid statements for all regions of Switzerland (kibesuisse 2015; Stern et al. 2022). Where necessary and possible, this report presents information for German-speaking, French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland separately.

1. ECEC governance in Switzerland

Switzerland is a federally organised country and responsibilities for the system of early childhood education and care (ECEC) are shared between federal government, cantons and municipalities. The term **early childhood education and care** was introduced in Switzerland with the "Orientation Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care" of the Swiss UNESCO Commission and the Swiss Childcare Network (Wustmann Seiler and Simoni 2016).

In Switzerland, ECEC for children **before the age of 4** is the responsibility of either canton or municipality, or the joint responsibility of both. Children between the **ages of 4 and 6** attend **kindergarten**, which is part of the Swiss education system and is the responsibility of the respective canton. Since kindergarten is part of the school system, all children from the age of 4 (or 5 in a very few cantons) attend free of charge. In the canton of Ticino (Italian-speaking Switzerland), kindergarten can be attended (voluntarily) from the age of 3.

Since kindergarten does not provide facilities for care before and after school or during lunch break, municipalities are obliged to offer **out-of-school care** if there is sufficient demand. They are responsible for the organisation of out-of-school care and for its quality and qualification requirements. Out-of-school care centres offer care for kindergarten and school children throughout the day from about 7:00 to 18:00 outside of regular school hours. In many cases, care during school holidays cannot be guaranteed. There is no legal entitlement in Switzerland to a place in an out-of-school care centre financed by the state. In addition, there are no specifications or standards by cantons, or specific quality criteria for out-of-school care. This is largely because there is no umbrella organisation or nationwide association for out-of-school care in Switzerland (Stamm 2017).

Slightly more than a third of children in Switzerland aged 0–12 years (35.6%) and also of children under 3 years of age (34.3%) are cared for in ECEC and out-of-school care, although the duration of attendance differs. While 46.1% of 0–12 year-olds and 19% of under 3 year-olds spend less than 10 hours per week in a childcare setting, 38.7% and 56.2% respectively attend between 10 and 30 hours per week (Federal Statistical Office 2023b). In French-speaking cantons, urban cantons such as Basel-Stadt and Geneva, and cantons with a large city such as Zurich, more than 70% of parents use childcare services, mainly the institutionalised forms, especially childcare centres for under 4 year-olds and out-of-school care. In the more rural cantons of German-speaking Switzerland and in Ticino, non-institutionalised childcare is the main option. Here, parents primarily rely on grandparents (Federal Statistical Office 2023c).

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children up to 4 years of age

Early childhood education and care settings are called *Kindertagesstätte (Kita)* in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, *crèche* in the French-speaking part and *nido dell'infanzia* in Italian-speaking Switzerland. The federal government imposes a licensing and supervisory obligation on cantons or municipalities for childcare institutions, whereby the responsibilities of both, as well as the responsibilities of social and/or education departments, are regulated differently (kibesuisse 2015; Stern et al. 2022). According to an evaluation study commissioned by the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Social Directors (*Schweizerische Konferenz der kantonalen Sozialdirektorinnen und Sozialdirektoren, SODK*), all cantons have issued requirements for the quality of childcare services. These include submitting a pedagogical concept when applying for a licence, staff qualification requirements or staff to child ratio. However, requirements and topics covered in pedagogical concepts remain vague and are not regulated (Ecoplan 2020). As Switzerland has a legal minimum of 14 weeks of maternity leave, which is very short compared to other countries, there is often a need for care facilities for babies, which require high ratio levels (Stern et al. 2015).

Childcare and education services for children aged 0 to 4 are not available in all regions of Switzerland and the demand for ECEC exceeds the supply in most regions. Furthermore, there are differences between language regions; there are better conditions for childcare for the first years of life in French-speaking Switzerland than in German- and Italian-speaking Switzerland (Faeh and Vogt 2021). Across the country, around 90% of all childcare facilities are organised as associations, limited liability companies, foundations, or company-run centres, with the association being the most common type of provider.

In German-speaking Switzerland, an average of two-thirds of the costs for childcare services is paid by parents, while in French-speaking Switzerland, parental contributions account for only one third (Stern et al. 2015). Two thirds of the providers run one to three childcare centres. Strategic management is often a voluntary board of directors, while business and pedagogical management is usually in the hands of a childcare Centre Director. In larger organisations, operational management is increasingly separated from pedagogical management (kibesuisse 2015).

Working conditions in childcare institutions are set autonomously, in accordance with the legal requirements and regulations of cantons and municipalities. Only the canton of Vaud (French-speaking Switzerland) introduced a collective labour agreement in the childcare sector in January 2019 (*Convention collective cantonale de travail dans le secteur de l'accueil de jour de l'enfance*) (Faeh and Vogt 2021).

Early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children over 4 years of age

The focus in *kindergarten* (German-speaking Switzerland), *école enfantine* (French-speaking Switzerland) and *scuola dell'infanzia* (Italian-speaking Switzerland) is on the children's education. Pedagogical approaches are mainly based on guided play and activities as well as free play. Cantons determine curricula and timetables and determine teaching materials. A nationally harmonised curriculum at regional language level (*Plan d'étude romand (PER)* in French-speaking cantons, *Piano di studio* in Italian-speaking cantons, and *Lehrplan 21* in German- and multilingual cantons) supports pedagogical quality in kindergartens throughout Switzerland. The curriculum emphasises the needs of the individual child, promoting learning through play and a focus on children's competences. Municipalities organise relevant settings, which allows for locally adapted solutions.

Clear strengths of ECEC from the age of 4 in Switzerland are the anchoring of kindergarten in the education system, the legal requirement that kindergarten must be offered throughout the



country, as well as the strong pedagogical perspective and play-oriented curriculum (Faeh and Vogt 2021). While kindergartens in German-speaking Switzerland have traditionally been more socially oriented with free play and holistic support, *école enfantine* in French-speaking Switzerland and also *scuola dell'infanzia* in Ticino have long been dominated by a school readiness approach, prioritising cognitive-oriented activities (Stamm 2017).

Kindergarten Teachers usually teach children in mixed-age classes (first and second kindergarten year - respectively children from 4 to 6 years) alone. They plan, teach and reflect on their lessons; they observe, accompany and support children in guided and free choice sequences. Kindergarten Teachers work together with other specialist staff (Special Education Teachers, Second Language Specialists, Speech Therapists) who support children in or alongside kindergarten activities. Kindergarten Teachers are also responsible for working with parents at parents' evenings, development and transition meetings, as well as for dealing with any problems that may arise. Another field of activity is the school unit: Kindergarten Teachers belong to a team of teachers of one or more schools, which is led by a principal (Faeh and Vogt 2021).

Out-of-school childcare

Out-of-school care as a form of supplementary family care is offered by municipalities for the time before and after classes and over lunch break. With regards to the standards for out-of-school care, only the defined minimum structural quality characteristics of the Ordinance on the Admission of Foster Children (PAVO) are met (Faeh and Vogt 2021). Throughout Switzerland, there is a lack of standardised principles for out-of-school care, as well as missing framework conditions; there are only recommendations (kibesuisse 2021a). Moreover, the qualifications of educators working in out-of-school care vary greatly (Faeh and Vogt 2021). This will be discussed in *chapter 2*.

2. Who belongs to the early years workforce?

2.1 Regular contact staff in ECEC care

In the field of early childhood education and care, educators with basic professional qualifications (Childcare Specialists, *Fachpersonen Betreuung - FaBe*) and educators with higher professional qualifications (Childhood Pedagogues, *Kindheitspädagoginnen/-pädagogen - HF¹*) work together. With increasing responsibility, the required competence profile also increases. It is considered desirable to combine educators with both basic and higher professional qualifications, apprentices, students and assistants (kibesuisse 2020). Due to historically different developments in initial professional education, the proportion of educators with higher professional qualifications is higher in French-speaking Switzerland (Dubach et al. 2018). In German-speaking Switzerland mainly Childcare Specialists work as qualified staff and possibly also as group leaders, whereas in French-speaking Switzerland these positions are filled with staff holding *HF* qualification.

Trainees are also in contact with children. They work under the supervision either of qualified Childcare Specialists (*FaBe*) with an additional qualification as vocational trainers or of *HF* Childhood Pedagogues. In addition, there are non-qualified staff in the ECEC sector who also work

¹ HF = *Höhere Fachschule* (higher vocational college, upper secondary level)

with children. There are again regional differences in the ratio of qualified and non-qualified staff: In German-speaking Switzerland, a minimum proportion of 50% of qualified childcare staff is required, while in French-speaking Switzerland at least two thirds of the staff must hold a recognised qualification (Ecoplan 2020).

In **kindergartens**, a qualified Kindergarten Teacher with a Bachelor's degree (formerly Kindergarten teaching diploma) works with the children. At the beginning of the school year or when there is a heavy workload in a class, a Classroom Assistant may be present. Classroom Assistants are either students of a teacher training college (in training), staff without formal qualifications, or staff with proof of a completed course of several days as a Classroom Assistant (for example: St.Gallen University of Teacher Education: PHSG n.d.).

Ideally, Social Pedagogues *FH*² or *HF*, Childhood Pedagogues *HF* or Childcare Specialists *FaBe* work in direct contact with children in **out-of-school care**. Pedagogical staff are supported by employees and assistants (in training as Pedagogues *FaBe* or Childhood Pedagogues *HF*; without initial professional education; interns or community service workers). The operational management is in the hands of the Centre Directors (kibesuisse 2022), who can be Social Pedagogues or Childcare Specialists on the one hand, or occasionally non-qualified staff on the other. There is no minimum percentage of pedagogically trained staff for out-of-school care.

Table 1 below provides an overview of staff with direct contact with children in Switzerland. Staff in initial education/training (trainee *FaBe* as well as trainee Childhood Pedagogues) who work as non-qualified assistants are not listed here.

Table 1

Switzerland: ECEC staff in centre-based settings (childcare, pre-primary, out-of-school)

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
Childcare sector				
Childcare Specialist <i>Fachperson</i> <i>Betreuung (FaBe) –</i> <i>Fachrichtung Kinder</i> <i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Childcare centre <i>Kindertagesstätte</i> <i>Crèche</i> <i>Nido dell’infanzia</i> 0–3 years ³ Out-of-school care <i>Hort</i> 4–12 years	Group leader (core professional) Qualified co-worker	0–12 years with specialisation in early childhood	3 years of dual education/training at a vocational school (<i>Berufsfachschule</i>), spending 3½ days in a childcare setting <i>Award:</i> Federal certificate of proficiency (EFZ) With additional study time also:

² FH = *Fachhochschule* (university of applied sciences, tertiary level)

³ **Editors’ note:** International data sources use varying ways of presenting the age range of children enrolled in ECEC settings. We have chosen the following age-inclusive format for the SEEPRO-3 reports in countries with a school entry age at 6: **0–2** years for children **up to** 3 years of age and **3–5** years for 3, 4 and 5 year-olds. In Switzerland the corresponding formats are **0–3** and **4–5** years.



Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
				Vocational baccalaureate (<i>Berufsmatura</i>) ECTS credits: n/a ⁴ EQF level: 4 ISCED 2011: 3
Childhood Pedagogue HF <i>Kindheitspädagogin/ Kindheitspädagoge HF</i> <i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Childcare centre <i>Kindertagesstätte</i> <i>Crèche</i> <i>Nido dell'infanzia</i> 0–3 years Out-of-school care <i>Hort</i> 4–12 years	Group leader (core professional) Sometimes leader of a childcare centre or setting (core professional)	0–16 years (with focus on early childhood)	2 to 4-year professional education/training (depending on prior education) with at least 50% in employment <i>Award: Diploma HF</i> ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2011: 5
Social Pedagogue HF <i>Sozialpädagogin / Sozialpädagoge HF</i> <i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Out-of-school care <i>Hort</i> 4–12 years	Centre director Group leader	Multi-age	2-4 years at higher vocational college (depending on prior education) <i>Award: Diploma HF</i> ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2011: 5
Social Pedagogue FH <i>Sozialpädagogin / Sozialpädagoge FH</i> <i>Profile:</i> Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional	Out-of-school care <i>Hort</i> 4–12 years	Centre director Group leader	Multi-age	3 years, university of applied sciences <i>Award: Bachelor (BA/BSc)</i> ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6
Education sector				
Kindergarten Teacher <i>Kindergartenlehrperson BA</i>	Pre-primary class <i>Kindergarten</i> <i>École enfantine - Cycle 1</i> <i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> 4–5 years	Class leader (core professional)	4–6 years	3 years at university of applied sciences <i>Award: Bachelor (BA)</i> ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6

⁴ n/a = not applicable

Job title	Main ECEC workplace settings and age range	Main roles and positions	Main age range focus of initial professional education	Minimum qualification requirement ETCS credits EQF level ISCED level
<i>Profile:</i> Pre-primary Education Professional	(first 2 years of compulsory schooling)			ISCED 2011: 6
Classroom Assistant <i>Klassenassistentkraft</i>	Pre-primary class <i>Kindergarten</i> <i>École enfantine - Cycle 1</i> <i>Scuola dell'infanzia</i> 4–5 years	Non-qualified co-worker		None

Box 1

SEEPRO profile categories for ECEC core professionals (adapted from Oberhuemer, Schreyer, and Neuman 2010)

- **Early Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (specialist focus, 0–6/7 years)
- **Pre-primary Education Professional** (exclusive pre-primary focus 3/4–6 years)
- **Pre-primary and Primary Education Professional** (focus on pre-primary *and* primary education 3/4–10/11 years)
- **Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional** (mainly broad focus, including ECEC, usually 0–12 years, but sometimes including adults)
- **Social Care/Health Care Professional** (sometimes early childhood focus, sometimes broad focus, including adults)

2.2 Centre leader

Childcare sector

For the position of Centre Director of a **childcare centre** (*Kindertagesstätte/crèche/nido dell'infanzia*), no specific federal-level qualification is required. Childcare Specialists with relevant work experience are permitted to manage a facility, as are Childhood Pedagogues *HF*, the latter mostly in the case of larger centres. Most Centre Directors attend some kind of further training for this task, but there are regional differences: In French-speaking Switzerland, in addition to work experience, a tertiary education is usually a prerequisite for managing a childcare centre, while in German-speaking Switzerland, further education in management or business administration is more likely to be required (Ecoplan 2020; SODK and EDK 2022).

Various training institutions offer professional development courses in leadership. These include specific training in childcare management, or a higher professional examination for a managerial position in the social and socio-medical field, or further training in leadership to the level of a CAS⁵ at a university of applied sciences (e.g. CAS "Leadership in daycare structures" at the Lucerne University of Teacher Education). In childcare, however, certificates and diplomas that are tailored as industry certificates to the qualifications of managers in this field still dominate

⁵ CAS = Certificate of Advanced Studies

(Dubach et al. 2018). In Ticino, the CAS "*Il nido dell'infanzia in coordinamento pedagogico e organizzativo*" for childcare centre managers was launched in 2008 (Stamm 2017).

As there is no job description in Switzerland for the position of Centre Director in ECEC; understanding of leadership, type of tasks and possible contact with children are also not defined. Depending on the size of the setting, the Centre Director has more administrative than pedagogical tasks to fulfil. In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, Childhood Pedagogues *HF* sometimes take over the pedagogical management (the pedagogical programme, support plans, annual plans, etc.) or the site management in larger facilities. However, there are still many staff without leadership qualifications in management positions (Dubach et al. 2018). In eight cantons, a management qualification is only expected from a certain size of childcare setting, in three cantons, longstanding professional experience is considered equivalent to obtaining a management or leadership position, while in twelve cantons, training with a management qualification is required (Faeh and Vogt 2021). The *SODK* and the *EDK*⁶ (2022) recommend hiring people with pedagogical and business skills, as well as leadership skills and personal aptitude for management positions in early childhood education.

In some cases, managers of **out-of-school care** facilities have a higher level of training. However, there are no cantonal qualification requirements, which is why some out-of-school care is also managed by *FaBe* Childcare Specialists.

Education sector

For **kindergarten** (pre-primary class), management lies with the school to which the kindergarten belongs. The School's Principal is responsible for pedagogical quality, staff management, budget and infrastructure planning and represents the school externally. School Principals have a nationally recognised diploma in school leadership (SDBB n.d.).

2.3 Centre-based positions of responsibility

Childcare sector

The only designated position of responsibility in childcare centres is that of supporting apprentices in the centre. Besides a completed apprenticeship and at least two years of professional experience, a 5-day course for vocational support staff is compulsory. Such a position can be accompanied by higher pay, but this is not guaranteed.

Education sector

Similarly, the only position of responsibility in kindergartens is that of guiding or **mentoring students** during their field practice. For this purpose, Kindergarten Teachers can attend a further training course of several days (e.g. training as a field practice teacher/mentor at the University of Teacher Education St. Gallen). However, this is not a prerequisite. Internship teachers receive additional compensation for their supervisory task.

⁶ EDK = Swiss Conference of Cantonal Educational Directors (*Schweizerische Konferenz der Kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren/-direktorinnen*)



2.4 Co-ordinating and supervisory staff

Childcare sector

There are three quality labels for **childcare centres** in Switzerland: (1) QualiKita, (2) Education and Learning Stories (*Bildungs- und Lerngeschichten*, BULG) and (3) Infans. Centres with such a quality label are regularly visited and evaluated (kibesuisse 2015).

- *QualiKita* is a certification procedure with a focus on pedagogical quality, awarded by kibesuisse⁷ and the Jacobs Foundation⁸. *QualiKita* covers all quality dimensions of a childcare centre with a focus on pedagogical quality. It aims to measure, describe, and further develop the quality of an institution. To date, 107 Swiss childcare centres have been awarded the label, and 27 further centres are in the process of being labelled (kibesuisse 2015, QualiKita 2022).
- *Education and learning stories* is a narrative approach towards documenting and supporting individual children’s educational pathways based on close observation. The Marie Meierhofer Institute for the Child (n.d.) implemented this approach in 25 childcare centres in German-speaking Switzerland from 2009 to 2013 and accompanied and evaluated the children’s learning stories with various studies (kibesuisse 2015).
- *Infans* offers a qualification framework for educational professionals in childcare centres (Bildungskrippen.ch 2016). The German version was adapted for Switzerland (Hofmann and Toberer n.d.) and has been introduced in 48 childcare centres so far. *Infans* focuses on the thematic interests of children, on their bonding needs, the relationship with their parents, as well as paying attention to their developmental needs and tailoring pedagogical activities to meet these accordingly (kibesuisse 2015). Childcare centres that work according to the *Infans* or *education and learning stories* approaches are grouped together in the “Network Education” (Netzwerk Bildungsort Kita n.d.), which offers training and further education.

In **out-of-school care**, the Ordinance on the Admission of Foster Children (PAVO) stipulates that the supervisory authority should carry out inspection visits as often as necessary, but at least every two years, to assess the welfare and quality of care for children. Providers, whether private companies, non-profit organisations, or public services, have no influence on how the supervisory authority carry out these inspections. The supervisory authority must ensure that the requirements for granting a licence are met and that providers comply with the legal provisions and conditions (PAVO 2017).

Education sector

In **kindergartens**, the School’s Principal is responsible for supervisory tasks. In the context of personnel management, they visit Kindergarten Teachers annually, observe class activities and discuss these with the teacher.

2.5 Specialist support staff

Specialists provide support for children in childcare centres and out-of-school settings as needed (e.g. early preventative education).

Since kindergarten is part of the Swiss school system, kindergarten children benefit from screening examinations and, if necessary, receive support during or alongside lessons in the form of

⁷ The Swiss Childcare Association *kibesuisse* is the Swiss professional and trade association for childcare services.

⁸ The Jacobs Foundation invests in the future of young people so that they can become socially responsible and productive members of society.



special needs education, second language instruction, speech therapy and psychomotor therapy (Faeh and Vogt 2021).

3. Structural composition of ECEC workforce: qualifications, gender, ethnicity

According to a study on the demand for skilled workers in social professions (IWSB 2016), 42% of employees in the **childcare sector** are trained professionals, 11% obtained similar training, 18% are *FaBe* trainees, 18% have no formal qualifications, and 11% are students in training. This means that in Switzerland, the number of qualified professionals with formal training is nearly the same as the number of employees without training (IWSB 2016). The SODK and EDK (2022) recommend a proportion of caregivers with professional qualifications of at least 60% of the total number of staff, and a target value of 80%.

Table 2

Switzerland: Number of employees in childcare settings according to occupational title and qualification status (IWSB 2016, 5, no more recent data available)

Occupational title	Formal qualification	Similar qualification	Apprentice trainees (<i>FaBe</i>)	Without formal qualification	Student in training	Total
Childcare Specialist – (<i>FaBe</i>)	18,300 (42%)	4,800 (11%)	8,100 (18%)	7,800 (18%)	4,900 (11%)	43,800
Childhood Pedagogue <i>HF</i>	3,300 (59%)	500 (10%)	600 (11%)	400 (8%)	700 (12%)	5,600
Social Pedagogue <i>HF/FH</i>	14,000 (70%)	1,300 (7%)	2,100 (11%)	1,100 (5%)	1,500 (7%)	20,100

In the summer of 2020, 2,778 Childcare Specialists graduated; 2,323 were women and 455 men. Although the male apprenticeship entry rate for the years 2018 to 2020 was 16%, only 8% of childcare and out-of-school care staff in Switzerland are men (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2020b; 2020c). The figure is even lower for the pre-primary sector. According to SAVOIRSOCIAL, it is still difficult for men to access and remain in the field due to multi-layered prejudices.

In 2020, 556 women and 238 men graduated as Social Pedagogues *HF*. In 2020, of the 437 graduates in Childhood Pedagogy *HF* (formerly Child Educators *HF*), 401 were women and 36 men (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2020c).

The IWSB study (2016) mentions for the social sector an above-average rate of women as well as many younger employees, a high part-time rate, and a rather low rate (12%) of employees with a migration background. The authors explain the latter by the fact that minimal language skills are required in these professions. It is also noticeable that up to one third of the staff does not hold the corresponding formal education (IWSB 2016). This applies equally to management staff, group leaders and pedagogical staff (Faeh and Vogt 2021).

Since most Swiss teacher education colleges train **Kindergarten** Teachers not only for the kindergarten level but also for the first two to three years of primary school, no information can be derived for the number of men in kindergarten; however, in the academic year 2021/22, 94.5%



of teachers in Swiss kindergartens were women (Federal Statistical Office 2023d). Data on the migration background of Kindergarten Teachers were compiled for 2014. At that time, only 3% of Kindergarten Teachers were not Swiss nationals (Federal Statistical Office 2016). It can be assumed that most Kindergarten Teachers in Switzerland hold a relevant diploma or acquired post-qualification.

4. Initial professional education (IPE)

4.1 Initial qualifying routes (higher education and vocational)

In Switzerland, staff in early childhood education and care, out-of-school care and pre-primary education have very different qualifications. These differences are due to the different work-specific requirements but can also be attributed to different training traditions or anchoring in voluntary work (Dubach et al. 2018).

Childcare Specialist (*FaBe Kinder*) (in French-speaking Switzerland: *assistant socio-éducatif / assistante socio-éducative*; in Ticino: *operatore / operatrice socioassistenziale con specializzazione in educazione della prima infanzia*) is a three-year apprenticeship leading to a federal certificate of proficiency. Trainees attend a vocational school one and a half days a week. The rest of the time they work in early childhood or out-of-school care, where they are supervised by a trainer. In addition, they attend so-called interdisciplinary courses on 20 days during the 3-year apprenticeship. *FaBe* are trained to work with children aged 0–12 years, but with a focus on early childhood. The main area of work for a trained Childcare Specialist is working with children as a co-educator or as a group leader. In the European comparison of qualifications (Swiss Confederation 2015), *FaBe* are classified at EQF level 4. The ISCED category is 3 (Federal Statistical Office 2015).

Table 3

Switzerland: Childcare Specialist

<p>Job title in German: <i>Fachperson Betreuung Fachrichtung Kinder (FaBe Kinder)</i></p> <p>Job title in French: <i>Assistant socio-éducatif / assistante socio-éducative</i></p> <p>Job title in Italian: <i>Operatore / operatrice socioassistenziale con specializzazione in educazione della prima infanzia</i></p> <p>Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Secondary school leaving certificate</p> <p>Professional studies: 3 years at vocational school – 1½ day per week in school, 3½ days in a childcare or out-of-school care</p> <p>Award: Swiss Federal Certificate of Proficiency (upper secondary level)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Eidgenössischem Fähigkeitszeugnis EFZ</i> (German-speaking Switzerland) • <i>Certificat fédéral de capacité CFC</i> (French-speaking Switzerland) • <i>Attesto federale di capacità AFC</i> (Italian-speaking Switzerland) <p>ECTS credits: n/a</p> <p>EQF level: 4</p> <p>ISCED 2011: 3</p> <p>Main fields of work: Early childhood centre, out-of-school care</p>

The degree programme for **Childhood Pedagogues HF** (*Höhere Fachschule*) can be completed following an apprenticeship with an EFZ/CFC/AFC, or with a general university entrance qualification or a subject-linked university entrance qualification. This professional education lasts two to four years (depending on previous education), during which time the Childhood Pedagogues work at least 50% in an early childhood or out-of-school care setting. One entry requirement is at least 800 hours of practical experience. The age range covered is 0–16 years.

There are regional differences in the professional category of Childhood Pedagogues HF. In French-speaking Switzerland (Romandie), a diploma from a higher technical college is a prerequisite for working as a co-educator or group leader (tertiary level of education), while in German-speaking Switzerland only a Federal Certificate of Proficiency (EFZ) is expected (secondary level of education) (kibesuisse 2015). In the German-speaking part of Switzerland, HF Childhood Pedagogues often work as early childhood centre directors or as pedagogical managers in larger organisations. In the European comparison of qualifications (Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft 2015), Childhood Pedagogues HF are classified at EQF level 5 and ISCED level 5 (Federal Statistical Office 2015).

Table 4

Switzerland: Childhood Pedagogue HF

<p>Job title in German: <i>Kindheitspädagogin / Kindheitspädagoge HF</i> Job title in French: <i>éducateur de l'enfance / éducatrice de l'enfance ES⁹</i> Job title in Italian: <i>educatore dell'infanzia / educatrice dell'infanzia SSS¹⁰</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: Apprenticeship proficiency certificate (EFZ, CFC, AFC) or general university qualification or vocational baccalaureate with between 400 and 800 hours of work experience</p> <p>Professional studies: 2 to 4 years depending on previous education at a Higher Vocational College, at least 50% in a childcare setting</p> <p>Award: Diploma in Childhood Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Diplom HF</i> (German-speaking Switzerland) • <i>Diplôme fédéral ES</i> (French-speaking Switzerland) • <i>Diploma federale SSS</i> (Italian-speaking Switzerland) <p>ECTS credits: n/a EQF level: 5 ISCED 2011: 5 Main fields of work: Early childhood centres, out-of-school care</p>

In Switzerland, Kindergarten Teachers receive their professional education at Universities of Teacher Education (*Pädagogische Hochschulen*). Admission requirements are a general or subject-specific university entrance qualification, or a vocational training EFZ with a specialised preliminary course. The three-year programme qualifies students to teach not only in kindergarten but, in most cantons, also in the first two (or three) grades of primary school. Training at a University of Teacher Education is completed with a BA Pre Primary and Primary Education after attaining 180 ECTS credits. Kindergarten teachers are classified at EQF level 6 in the European comparison of qualifications (Swiss Confederation 2015). The ISCED category is 6 (Federal Statistical Office 2015).

⁹ *ES École Supérieures* (French-speaking Switzerland)

¹⁰ *SSS Scuole Specializzate Superiori* (Italian-speaking Switzerland)



Table 5

Switzerland: Kindergarten Teacher

<p>Job title in German: <i>Kindergartenlehrperson</i> Job title in French: <i>enseignant / enseignante en école enfantine</i> Job title in Italian: <i>docente di scuola dell'infanzia</i> Profile: Pre-primary (and Primary) Education Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: General or subject-specific university entrance qualification or vocational training EFZ /CFC/AFC with a specialised preliminary course Professional studies: 3 years at a University of Teacher Education Award: Bachelor (BA Pre Primary and Primary Education) ECTS credits: 180 EQF level: 6 ISCED 2011: 6 Main fields of work: Kindergarten – in most cases also for the first two-three grades of primary school</p>

Ideally, a **Social Pedagogue HF** or **FH** would be responsible for the management of out-of-school care. The **HF** programme (*éducateur / éducatrice sociale ES, educatore / educatrice sociale SSS*) is similar to that of Childhood Pedagogue (see Table 4). The **FH** programme is usually a three-year full-time course at a University of Applied Sciences for Social Work and is completed with the federal diploma "Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Science in Social Work". Compared to the HF training, the scientific-theoretical content of the FH training outweighs the practical content (SDBB n.d.) Social Pedagogues HF are classified at EQF level 5 in the European comparison of qualifications (Swiss Confederation 2015). The ISCED category is 5. Social Pedagogues FH are classified at EQF level 6 (Swiss Confederation 2015). The ISCED category is 6 (Federal Statistical Office 2015).

Table 6

Switzerland: Social Pedagogue

<p>Job title in German: Sozialpädagogin/Sozialpädagoge HF, FH Job title in French: <i>éducateur social / éducatrice sociale ES, HES¹¹</i> Job title in Italian: <i>educatore / educatrice sociale SSS, SUP¹²</i> Profile: Social and Childhood Pedagogy Professional</p>
<p>Entry requirements: HF, ES, SSS – see Table 4. FH, HES, SUP – General or subject-specific university entrance qualification or Diploma HF Professional studies: HF – see Table 4. FH – As a rule, 3 years full-time study at a University of Applied Sciences for Social Work Award: Bachelor (BA/BSc) in Social Work ECTS credits: n/a (HF), 180 (FH) EQF level: 5 (HF), 6 (FH) ISCED 2011: 5 (HF), 6 (FH) Main field of work: Out-of-school care</p>

¹¹ HES, *Haute École Sociale*

¹² SUP, *Scuola Universitaria Professionale*



4.2 Competences, curricula and pedagogic-didactic approaches in IPE programmes

Childcare Specialist (*Fachperson Betreuung – Fachrichtung Kinder, FaBe*)

A Childcare Specialist FaBe accompanies children and their families as they settle into the new childcare situation. They care for infants and toddlers and develop a relationship with them that meets their needs. They accompany children in group situations and support the inclusion of children with disabilities in the group. They record educational and developmental processes and plan suitable offers and activities with co-workers. They use their broad repertoire of creative and musical tools to carry out these activities (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2020a). *Table 7* shows which competences are supported during professional education or apprenticeship.

Table 7

Switzerland: Childcare Specialist *FaBe*

Competence areas (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2020a, 8)

Applying transversal competences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Act according to one's own professional role – Reflect on one's own work – Shape professional relationships – Communicate appropriately for the situation and target group – Collaborate to overcome conflict
Performing everyday routines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Planning one's own work – Structuring the daily schedule with children – Protecting privacy and providing opportunities for retreat – Designing the daily environment – Carrying out household tasks – Preparing and accompanying mealtimes – Creating an environment that promotes movement – Supporting personal hygiene and personal care – Acting appropriately in accident, illness and emergency situations
Enabling autonomy and participation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Enabling and accompanying participation in social and cultural life – Supporting children in decision-making processes – Supporting social contacts and relationships
Working in an organisation and a team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Working together as a team – Working together inter-professionally with other professionals – Working together with relatives and other caregivers – Contributing to the quality management process – Carrying out general administrative tasks
Acting in specific support situations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Accompanying children and their families during the settling-in period – Accompanying and shaping transitions in relation to children and groups – Forming relationships with infants and toddlers and carrying out personal care – Accompanying and supporting children in group situations
Supporting education and development, maintaining and promoting quality of life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Assist in recording and documenting educational and developmental processes – Participate in the planning of educational and developmental support services – Stimulate and implement group and child-centred activities – Participate in analysing and evaluating the educational and developmental activities

Childhood Pedagogue HF

Childhood Pedagogues HF are trained to develop, reflect and further develop pedagogical concepts; to observe children and document their developmental steps; to create stimulating learning environments; to design transitions between children's learning stages; to contribute professional knowledge to the cooperation with other professionals; to involve parents and other caregivers in the daily care routine. In addition, Childcare Pedagogues are prepared for taking on leadership tasks such as the management of a childcare institution as well as the staff employed, organisational and administrative tasks and working on quality development (SDBB n.d.).

The IPE curriculum includes the following:

- Pedagogical and psychological basics
- Didactics and methodology
- Education, upbringing and development of the child
- Work with parents
- Cooperation with professionals
- Social, pedagogical, political environment
- Teamwork and leadership
- Administration and organisation
- Reflection on professional practice (function, role and tasks)

Table 8 shows the Swiss framework curriculum for courses at the higher vocational colleges HF for the study of childhood pedagogy.

Table 8

Switzerland: Framework plan for courses in "Childhood Pedagogy HF" at Higher Vocational Colleges – Competence areas (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2021a, 5)

1. Planning and implementation of pedagogy				
1.1 Recording and analysing the child's living environment	1.2 Analysing each child's educational and developmental pathways	1.3 Developing and advancing the pedagogical programme	1.4 Stimulating educational processes in each child and in the group	1.5 Initiating and maintaining educational partnerships
2. Guiding and supporting children in everyday activities				
2.1 Building and shaping a relationship with each child	2.2 Organising rooms and the spatial environment to promote learning in a safe and needs-oriented way.	2.3 Observing individual children and the group in everyday activities and adjusting pedagogical approaches accordingly	2.4 Working with groups of children and shaping the group situation to promote each child's development	2.5 Supporting transitions
3. Developing a professional identity				
3.1 Coping with challenging and changing situations	3.2 Understanding and reflecting on the professional role			
4. Process analysis and documentation				



4.1 Analysing pedagogical activities	4.2 Documenting pedagogical activities and processes			
5. Working in a professional environment				
5.1 Team work	5.2 Cooperating with other professionals and support services	5.3 Building and maintaining networks		
6. Advancing the profession				
6.1 Reflecting on one's own professional work in a socio-political context	6.2 Developing and implementing innovative ideas and approaches for one's own field of work	6.3 Advocacy for professional interests		
7. Participating in developing the organisation/institution				
7.1 Taking on leadership and tasks of responsibility	7.2 Developing and assuring quality	7.3 Developing and sustaining internal and external communication	7.4 Developing and leading projects	

Social Pedagogue HF

In the study of Social Pedagogy HF, competence specifications include joint planning and development of social pedagogical work, accompaniment and support in everyday and transitional situations, development of one's own professional identity, process analysis and documentation, work in a professional environment, and participation in the development of the organisation/institution (SDBB n.d.). According to the framework curriculum for Social Pedagogues HF, the following work areas and competences are acquired during the study programme (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2015):

- Accompanying people in coping with difficult life situations and support them in goal-oriented ways
- Sharing and helping to shape the daily lives of clients
- Enable, support and promote the social participation and integration of clients into society
- Developing and activating resources for shaping clients' lives
- Working with client systems
- Cooperate in the socio-educational team, with other professionals and in the organisation
- Know the legal and political environment and include it in the implementation of the socio-educational mandate
- Reflect on and further develop one's own person, professional identity and professional activities

Table 9

Switzerland: Draft framework curriculum for courses in "Social Pedagogy" at Higher Vocational Colleges HF – Competence areas (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2021b, 6)

1. Joint planning and development of socio-pedagogical work				
1.1 Taking note of the living context of	1.2 Determining support needs in a participative way	1.3 Planning and implementing goals	1.4 Cooperating with the family and the	

the accompanied person	and developing these together	and strategies together with the accompanied person or group	social environment	
2. Guidance and support in everyday and transitional situations				
2.1 Building and shaping a relationship to the accompanied person	2.2 Strengthening the self-efficacy of the accompanied person and promoting their self-determination	2.3 Support participation in social life	2.4 Organise the environment and conditions according to needs	2.5 Support group situations and involvement
2.6 Providing everyday support for accompanied persons according to needs	2.7 Accompanying in situations of transition and crisis			
3. Developing a professional identity				
3.1 Coping with challenging and changing situations	3.2 Understanding and reflecting on the professional role			
4. Process analysis and documentation				
4.1 Analysing and adapting socio-pedagogical processes and activities	4.2 Documenting processes and writing reports			
5. Working in a professional environment				
5.1 Working in a team	5.2 Cooperating with other specialists and support agencies	5.3 Building and sustaining networks		
6. Advancing the profession				
6.1 Reflecting on one's own work in a socio-political context	6.2 Developing and implementing innovative ideas and approaches in one's own field of work	6.3 Advocacy for professional interests		
7. Participating in the development of processes and projects				
7.1 Taking on leadership tasks and responsibilities	7.2 Developing and ensuring quality	7.3 Developing and ensuring internal and external communication	7.4 Developing and leading projects	

Social Pedagogue FH

In the social work degree programme at the Universities of Applied Sciences, topics such as upbringing and education, coping with everyday life, social work organisations, the welfare state

and social economy, neighbourhood work, and others are taught as elective modules. Practical training takes place in the professional field of social pedagogy. Theory and practice are inter-linked and consolidated through project work (SDBB n.d.). *Table 10* shows the contents of the Bachelor's programme in Social Work at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) as an example, valid from 2019.

Table 10

Switzerland: Content of the Bachelor's degree programme in social work (ZHAW n.d.)

Compulsory modules in the main study programme	
<i>Module 1</i>	History and theories of social work
<i>Module 2</i>	Development and socialisation
<i>Module 3</i>	Basics of professional work
<i>Module 4</i>	Introduction to research work
<i>Module 5</i>	Portfolio 1
<i>Module 6</i>	Legal and ethical foundations of social work
<i>Module 7</i>	Social and political framework conditions of social work
<i>Module 8</i>	Social change, social problems, social inequality
<i>Module 9</i>	Organisations in the social sector
<i>Module 10</i>	Case study workshop
<i>Module 11</i>	Portfolio 2
Elective courses in the main study programme	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Participation, involvement, integration – Social space, culture and community development – Phases of life, transitions and generations – Deviance, delinquency and crime prevention – Vulnerability and interventions 	

Kindergarten Teachers

Kindergarten Teachers in Switzerland study at a University of Teacher Education (PH). They obtain qualified teacher status for work in pre-primary education and, depending on the university, for the first two or the first three primary school years. *Table 11* gives an overview of the study content, using the example of the study programme in kindergarten and primary education at the University of Teacher Education St. Gallen with a teaching qualification for kindergarten to third grade (PHSG 2019).

Table 11:

Switzerland: Content of the Bachelor study programme in pre-primary and primary education (PHSG 2019, 34)

	ECTS credits
Core studies	
Professional and study skills	4
Education and reference sciences	31
Languages	10
Nature, mankind and society/mathematics	20
Design, music and movement/sport	30
Learning an instrument	3
Focus studies	4
Thematic week: writing and learning in Regional Didactic Centres	1
Field studies	40
Specialist studies	16

Bachelor thesis	8
Self-directed studies	
Thematic weeks (3 weeks à 1 ECTS credit)	3
Optional subject studies or recognition of school-relevant achievements	7
Work in learning communities	3
Total	180

4.3 Alternative entry and qualification routes, system permeability

Childcare Specialists (*Fachpersonen Betreuung – Fachrichtung Kinder, FaBe*) can complete a vocational baccalaureate either simultaneously (this increases the number of school days) or subsequently. Furthermore, after completing their vocational training, they can follow up with further studies to become a Childhood Pedagogue *HF*. The vocational baccalaureate or the qualification as a Childhood Pedagogue *HF* provides access to a university of applied sciences for a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Social Work and, with an additional specific preliminary course, to a study programme for a BA in Pre Primary and Primary Education at a University of Teacher Education.

Kindergarten Teachers with a BA in Pre Primary and Primary Education and Social Pedagogues with a BA/BSc in Social Work can complete a Master's programme as further education, for example the Master's in Early Childhood Studies (University of Teacher Education St. Gallen, PHSG), or the Master's in Early Childhood (University of Teacher Education Thurgau, PHTG).

What is missing is the possibility of a BA Early Childhood, which would offer a bridge to the Master's degree programmes in Early Childhood for Childcare Specialists with a vocational baccalaureate or for Childhood Pedagogues *HF*.

5. Guided workplace experience (practicum) in the initial professional education of core professionals

In Switzerland's dual VET system, Childcare Specialists *FaBe* spend at least three days in a childcare setting (early childhood or out-of-school care) and Childhood Pedagogues *HF* at least 2½ days a week. Curricula for the respective training courses clearly specify which learning goals are to be worked towards at which learning site (training institution, childcare setting, interdisciplinary courses) (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2020a), whereby all learning goals are based on the defined competence specifications (see *chapter 4.2*). Learners/students are accompanied by vocational support staff (whose training is discussed in *chapter 2.3*). Whether those with a mentoring task are paid extra or allocated time for this work is not handled uniformly.

Students at the universities of teacher education sometimes have weekly field practice days and / or block practicum periods during their 3-year course of studies. At the University of Teacher Education St. Gallen, for example, 19 weeks are allocated to field studies and accompanying seminars, which together add up to 40 ECTS credits (PHSG 2019, p. 24). As explained in *chapter 2.3*, some field practice teachers have completed a CPD course focussing on the mentoring task and are additionally remunerated for accompanying students. Field practice is primarily about applying the theoretically acquired knowledge in practice. The specific content is defined individually by the universities of teacher education.



6. Continuing professional development (CPD) of ECEC staff

In their study of continuing professional development offers in the field of childcare in German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland, Geiss and Wallimann (2020) identified 40 training providers which, in 2018, advertised a total of 542 courses for childcare staff in early childhood and out-of-school care. These providers are either public (e.g. universities, universities of applied sciences and vocational schools) or private (e.g. limited liability companies, associations and foundations), with public providers accounting for almost 60% of the programmes offered. The CPD programmes can be divided into the following thematic groups: (1) *growing up* (e.g. babies, (language) development, health and nutrition); (2) *social* (e.g. everyday work, parental cooperation and pedagogy); and (3) *management, teamwork and organisational development* (e.g. administration, personnel management and reflection). Most of the training courses are full-day or multi-day courses (Geiss and Wallimann 2020).

CPD for Kindergarten Teachers may be school-based (SCHILF), courses offered at the cantonal level or courses offered by universities of teacher education. Teachers in the canton of St. Gallen, for example, are entitled to 3% of their working time (i.e. 57 hours per year for a 100% workload) for CPD (courses and peer observation) (Kanton St. Gallen, Amt für Volksschule 2021).

While entitlement to CPD is clearly regulated for Kindergarten Teachers, this is not always the case in the childcare sector. In several cantons, it is stipulated that providers should ensure accessibility to CPD for employees. In some cantons, attendance at CPD sessions is even a requirement, depending on the function. In their recommendations on the quality and financing of early childhood and out-of-school care, SODK and EDK (2022) emphasise that employees of childcare facilities should be enabled to attend regular training and further education courses. Time should be set aside for this in the calculation of the staffing ratio and the financing of CPD should be taken into account in the full costs per childcare place. Kibesuisse (2021b) recommends that its members offer three days per year for training and further education. Apart from these recommendations, there is no legal entitlement to days off and cost coverage for CPD in ECEC.

7. Working conditions and current workforce issues

7.1 Remuneration

Wages for staff in the field of ECEC were below the average Swiss income of CHF 6,665 (€6,857) for the year 2020 (Federal Statistical Office 2022). The wage recommendations presented in *Table 12* for professional staff take into account the level of education, professional experience and additional tasks.

Table 12

Switzerland: Wage recommendations according to qualification (kibesuisse 2021b, 19-22)

Occupational group	Annual income
Childcare Specialist <i>FaBe</i>	52,000 – 76,099 CHF €53,498 – 78,291
Childhood Pedagogue <i>HF</i>	61,100 – 98,670 CHF €62,860 – 101,512

Occupational group	Annual income
Centre Director without a tertiary education (e.g. Social Pedagogue <i>HF</i>)	71,500 – 108,251 CHF €73,559 – 101,512
Centre Director with a tertiary-level qualification (e.g. Social Pedagogue <i>FH</i>)	78,000 – 115,401 CHF €80,247 – 118,725
Kindergarten Teacher (see Fehr 2020)	73,963 – 112,311 CHF €76,093 – 115,546

In some cantons, Kindergarten Teachers still earn less than Primary School Teachers, even though they follow the same initial professional education (LCH 2018).

7.2 Full-time and part-time employment in ECEC provision

In 2022, more than 75% of mothers in Switzerland worked part time (Federal Statistical Office 2023e) and an above-average number of women work in the social sector (IWSB 2016). It is therefore not surprising that part-time work is widespread in this sector. There are no nationwide statistics on full- and part-time employment in the childcare sector. According to the latest figures from the Federal Statistical Office, 76.8% of Kindergarten Teachers in public schools and 19.3% in private schools work less than 50% of a full-time position. In public schools 14.6% and in private schools 42.3% are employed between 50% and 89% of a full-time position, and 8.6% of Kindergarten Teachers in public and 38.4% in private schools work more than 90% of a full-time position (Federal Statistical Office (2023d)).

7.3 Support measures in the workplace for newly qualified and newly appointed staff

Measures to support newly qualified or newly recruited staff are not regulated in the childcare sector.

In the majority of cases, Kindergarten Teachers complete a form of induction and are assigned a teacher mentor who provides support during the first year of employment. Only a few cantons do not offer an induction procedure. This introduction into the profession is often carried out by the universities of teacher education in cooperation with the local primary schools where kindergartens are based (SKBF 2011).

7.4 Non-contact time

In its guidelines, kibesuisse (2020, 9) recommends adding 10% to the childcare ratio for indirect pedagogical work without children. However, this part of the work is not generally regulated. SODK and EDK (2022) also explicitly recommend including non-contact time in the staffing ratio for work that is not directly pedagogical (team meetings, training sessions, etc.).

The working time for Kindergarten Teachers is structured as follows (using the example of the Canton of St. Gallen): 88% teaching (planning, preparation, implementation, evaluation), 4% for pupils (counselling, support, work with parents), 5% school (pedagogical-administrative organisation of the school), 3% teacher (individual further education) (Canton of St. Gallen, Amt für Volksschule 2021).

7.5 Current staffing issues

In the childcare and education sector of ECEC, there has been a shortage of staff for some time (LCH 2021; SRF 2022). This is aggravated by the high turnover of staff, which makes both sustainable teamwork and continuous caring for individual children problematic. This turnover is at



least partly a consequence of the low pay and low prestige of the profession, as well as the high proportion of untrained staff. In addition, despite high popularity among trainees, the childcare professions get little social prestige (Stamm 2017). This is exacerbated by the fact that due to the shortage of teachers (LCH 2021) in Switzerland, more and more specialist staff are migrating from the early childhood sector to schools and kindergartens (ZLV 2022). The childcare sector consists of a noticeable number of younger employees, a high part-time rate and a low proportion of employees with a migration background. It is also worth noting that up to one third of staff do not have the appropriate formal education (IWSB 2016). Particularly revealing is the insight that in early childhood and out-of-school settings, direct work with children is usually carried out by staff who do not have relevant qualifications (Burger et al. 2017; IWSB 2016), as qualified staff are entrusted with management and training functions. Both wages and employment conditions in ECEC differ to such a large extent from canton to canton and from provider to provider that it is almost impossible to make nationwide statements (Stamm 2017).

In terms of the age distribution of Kindergarten Teachers, in public schools more than half of the teachers (51.6%) are between 40 and 60 years old, in private schools slightly less than half (44.4%) are in this age group. Only 15.8% (in public schools) and 18.2% (in private schools) are younger than 30 years (Federal Statistical Office 2023d).

8. Recent policy reforms and initiatives relating to staffing and professionalisation issues

In the last two decades the focus of ECEC in Switzerland has been on the expansion of childcare services. Currently, pedagogical quality is prominently discussed in research, practice, politics and society (Swiss UNESCO Commission 2019, Faeh and Vogt 2021). While in French-speaking Switzerland educators hold higher professional qualifications, in German-speaking Switzerland an increase in professional qualification levels is necessary. In order to improve pedagogical quality, educators should acquire a competence profile at tertiary level. Another focus of quality development should be continuing professional development of educators (Faeh and Vogt 2021).

As part of the research conducted by the Office for Labour and Social Policy Studies on behalf of SAVOIRSOCIAL (Dubach et al. 2018), the following qualification needs were identified in the field of early childhood policy:

Table 13
Switzerland: Qualification needs in the field of early childhood policy (according to Dubach et al. 2018).

Professionals without leadership function	Professionals with a leadership function
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educational orientation – Accompaniment of children’s learning and developmental processes – Inclusion and handling of diversity – Cooperation with parents – Reflection skills – Early language support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Educational orientation – Provision of initial and continuing education – Using the available provision of initial and continuing education – Competence building through initial and continuing education – Conceptual work – Cooperation with parents – Professional and practical guidance of staff – Qualification needs of centre leaders



Dubach et al. (2018) came to the conclusion that an explicit educational mandate should be formulated for the institutions of the early years 0–3 and that adequate resources should be made available for this purpose. Based on the results of this study, SAVOIRSOCIAL has decided to strengthen the vocational baccalaureate (*Berufsmatura*) that can be acquired alongside initial education/training in order to promote permeability to the university level (e.g. to universities of teacher education that offer Master's degree courses in the field of early childhood) and thus contribute to the professionalisation of the occupational field, as well as to examine new CPD offers in the field of early language support. Furthermore, the HF degree in childhood pedagogy should be promoted in German-speaking Switzerland (SAVOIRSOCIAL 2019).

9. Recent country-specific research focusing on ECEC staff

In Switzerland, central topics of ECEC, such as cooperation with parents and guardians, equal opportunities for all children and valuing diversity, are currently being explored in research and further training initiatives (Faeh and Vogt 2021). However, there is an acute need for more research and further training, as well as for the development of concepts for cooperation between professionals from childcare centres, Kindergarten Teachers and caregivers from out-of-school care. This is necessary to ensure process quality for the children throughout the day during the transitions from kindergarten to out-of-school care (lunch break), back to kindergarten, and then back to out-of-school care (Faeh and Vogt 2021).

Furthermore, continuous efforts to support the professionalisation of staff and to increase the level of qualification in ECEC are needed. Further training with a focus on interaction between educator and child is a particularly important aspect of enhancing process quality in ECEC. In addition, a common focus on process quality of all professionals (from childcare centres, kindergarten and out-of-school care) and close cooperation with parents and guardians is necessary to achieve better quality and thus equal educational opportunities for all children (Faeh and Vogt 2021).

In a recent Federal Council report on early childhood policy in Switzerland, existing gaps and potential for improvement regarding government activities in this area were summarised from the perspective of various stakeholders. A lack of statistical data, exchange of information and experience, coordination, access to services, quality and funding of services were identified (Swiss Confederation 2021). In the following, four current research projects focussing on ECEC staff are presented.

Quality development in childcare through web-mediated further training on supportive staff-child interaction in heterogeneous groups of young children (iQuaKi)

Source: University of Constance 2022, PHTG 2018 (see *References* for further details)

Aims and methods: In the first phase of the project, an online training course for educational professionals was developed. Training was aimed at professionals in childcare centres for children aged 0–4 years. Aim was to increase the quality of the staff–child interactions. This training was developed on the basis of established English-language formats and adapted for German-speaking countries.



The impact of the training was evaluated in the second project phase. For this purpose, 63 professionals participated in the training. They answered questionnaires before, immediately following and six months after the training, e.g. on their self-efficacy, reflective competence and pedagogical competence. Both professionals and parents answered questionnaires on children's social-emotional competences. In 30 facilities, standardised observations of quality of interaction according to CLASS Toddler (La Paro et al. 2012) were carried out at all three time points mentioned.

Selected findings: The evaluation shows that participants were very satisfied with the training. Professionals themselves perceive changes in their actions (e.g. more sensitive interactions) and their attitude (e.g. stronger consideration of the child's perspective). Initial analyses of the observations show that quality of interaction also improved after the training. In addition, findings confirm that a good quality of interaction between professional and child has a beneficial effect on their education: in particular, active learning support has a positive influence on children's learning behaviour (commitment and motivation).

Implications: The training will continue to exist as a CPD offer for pedagogical professionals after the end of the project and thus makes an important contribution to quality development in early childhood education. Furthermore, results of the study emphasise the relevance of quality of interaction and show how quality development can succeed through online training.

Mobilisation and development of interactional competences in professional relationships with parents: the context of child rearing [*Mobilisation et développement des compétences interactionnelles dans les relations professionnelles avec les parents: le contexte de l'éducation de l'enfance*]

Source: University of Geneva 2022 (see *References* for further details)

Aims and methods: The project aims to better understand how Childhood Pedagogues build relationships with parents in verbal interactions and how the skills to conduct such interactions can be developed in professional development programmes. The project uses video-ethnographic methods in two childcare centres in the canton of Geneva with different profiles in terms of socio-economic and geographical location.

Selected findings: Results are not currently available (April 2023).

Implications: The research findings will contribute to the professionalisation of Childcare Specialists and develop intervention and training methods based on the principles of interaction analysis in adult education.

Early language development: international research findings and a review of early language development in Switzerland

Source: Vogt, F., S. Stern und L. Fillietaz 2022 (see *References* for further details)

Aims and methods: The focus was on effective design of early language support for children aged from birth up to 4 years in Switzerland in the context of the various measures taken by cantons. The international research situation was presented based on around 700 scientific articles in German, English and French. Findings were condensed into a typology. Twelve case studies describe the different approaches in Switzerland.

Selected findings: Results show that attending an early education programme, e.g. childcare, parent-child group or playgroup, has a positive effect on school language skills. However, this is conditional on good pedagogical quality. Everyday integrated language support is more effective than separate groups and programmes. Parental education is also essential.

Implications: Further professionalisation of Childcare Specialists is urgently needed.

Coaching processes in language support in childcare settings

Source: PHSG 2022 - St.Gallen University of Teacher Education (see *References* for further details)

Aims and methods: This sub-project of the “Integrated support of German-language learning in childcare settings” study focuses on the research gap concerning effective coaching processes and the characteristics of successful coaching in ECEC. This research investigates how the coach (expert in German language development) and the coachee (professional caregiver) co-construct a common understanding of language development situation and professional practice that ensures a high quality of interaction in early childhood education. Of interest are specific situations that occur in the coaching interaction and how they are dealt with by coach and coachee. Coaches conduct an intensive coaching process with regular sessions every fortnight over one year. The 30 to 45-minute coaching sessions are conducted on-site in the childcare centres. During this process, three coaching sessions are recorded, and then individual interviews are conducted with the coach or coachee. Approximately 10 sessions will be studied. For data analysis, interaction analysis or grounded theory are planned.

Selected findings: Results are expected in 2025.

Implications: Providing new insights into coaching: showing a variety of different types of coaching and how coaching processes/conversations can be approached.

10. Workforce challenges – country expert assessment

Professionalisation initiatives for those working in the early years sector (0–3 years) in Switzerland are urgently needed. There are prerequisite conditions, however. The first is the possibility of retaining professionals in their jobs for longer periods of time with better pay, as the current high staff turnover undermines professionalisation. Second, Childcare Specialists should be given the opportunity to obtain a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood. This would enable care professionals with a vocational baccalaureate (*Berufsmatura*) and Childhood Pedagogues *HF* to study at a university of applied sciences and, after obtaining a BA in Early Childhood, to complete a Master's programme. This way, suitable candidates for higher education would not migrate to the social services sector (with a BA/BSc Social Work) and thus partly leave the early childhood sector. This would be an important development, especially considering the fact that SA-VOIRSOCIAL (2019) recommends explicitly promoting the vocational baccalaureate and the initial professional education of Childhood Pedagogues *HF* in German-speaking Switzerland. Professionalisation initiatives in the early childhood sector, however, also needs to include the provision of working time for professionals so that they can attend existing CPD courses and programmes during working hours. It would be important here – as called for by Faeh and Vogt (2021) – to offer courses focussing on improving process quality.

When looking at the **CPD topics** identified by Dubach et al. (2018) for professionals with and without leadership functions, it is striking that both groups have similar needs in terms of training. Above all, the topics of educational orientation, support for children's learning and devel-

opment processes and cooperation with parents stand out. It is immanently important that educational orientation and monitoring of children's learning and development processes are not considered in isolation according to age group, but discussed in joint concepts for cooperation between childcare centres, kindergartens and out-of-school care. Entering kindergarten, many children do not only switch from a childcare setting to kindergarten, but also from a childcare centre to an out-of-school setting. This double transition could be facilitated for children with a common educational orientation and concepts for cooperation. Guided transitions could take place with the involvement of parents, in institutions that have common understandings. In some communities, such transitions are better facilitated than in others (e.g. visiting days in out-of-school care with lunch, employees from out-of-school care as assistant workers in kindergarten). This type of cooperation between the three actors needs to take place more often and be explicitly promoted.

A **coordination of ECEC provision** as well as **national statistics for the early childhood sector** which provide information about use, financing, and above all, quality of provision, is a Swiss policy demand (Swiss Confederation 2021); it is particularly important for researchers in the field of early childhood, who depend on relevant statistical data and information as a basis for their studies. Switzerland has a broad and dynamic research practice in the field of early education in general and in early language development in particular, but what is missing is an institutionalised collaboration between the relevant training institutions (higher vocational colleges and vocational schools) and the higher education institutions conducting scientific research (universities of applied sciences, universities of teacher education and universities in general) (Vogt, Stern, and Fillietz 2022). What early education staff in Switzerland need from research are, on the one hand, studies on the interplay of influencing factors in the course of development and, on the other hand, effectiveness studies on pedagogical approaches and measures. In addition, early education services should be reviewed and further developed across the country to ensure pedagogical process quality.

International Cooperation

Switzerland is represented in international expert committees such as the *OECD Network on Early Childhood Education and Care ECEC*, *Eurydice Network* and *European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education*. Swiss experts have contributed to a European project and reports on inclusive early childhood education and care (*Inclusive Early Childhood Education IECE*) of the European Agency (2017) as well as to the OECD study on *Quality Beyond Regulations* with an in-depth country report on the situation of early childhood education and care in Switzerland (Faeh und Vogt 2021).

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