

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 23 (1996)
Heft: 5

Artikel: New directions for apprenticeship : wanted : training!
Autor: Bignasci, Ilaria
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-907769>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 17.04.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Wanted: training!

Office worker, baker, cook, decorator, gardener, florist, you name it. For both boys and girls, the Swiss apprentice system recognises a good 250 professions. But even so – or perhaps because of that very fact – it has

Ilaria Bignasci

not been spared the economic crisis. In the last ten years the number of young people taking up an apprenticeship has fallen from 190,000 to about 150,000. Although the situation has stabilised since 1993, many young people are still having problems finding a training position. Job market specialists have drawn the obvious conclusion from this: the apprenticeship market needs reform.

but it did not put in doubt the necessity for reform.

Need for change recognised

There can of course be no question of dismantling a system which for decades has played a central part in the vocational training of young people and has been imitated by countries like Germany and Austria. The aim must be to take immediate measures at a number of neuralgic points in the system and at the same time take in hand the question of more wide-ranging reform.

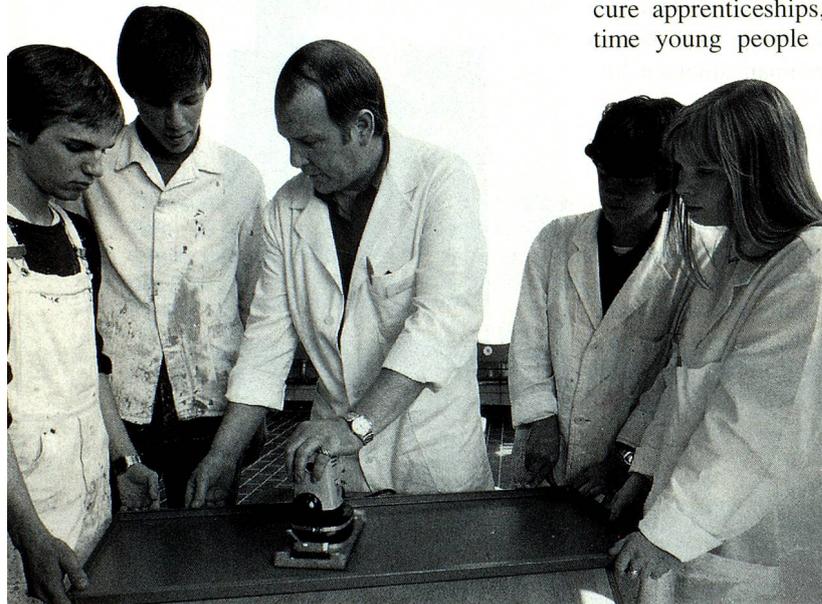
It is obvious that the situation differs according to region, economic branch and even particular business. Also, responsibility can be attributed only in part to the economic crisis. Politicians are jumping into the ring in a fight to secure apprenticeships, and at the same time young people are undergoing a

ships with bakers and butchers, nor in the field of medical care. The graphics branch and the watch-making industry also provide good possibilities at the moment. But it is true of course, as the proverb says, that “one swallow does not make a summer”. And since the vocational training system is of vital concern in the medium term for Switzerland as a business location, the government does intend to put forward a draft revision of the law next year. But in the best possible case the adjustments contained in it will not come into effect until near the end of the present parliament.

Training is no place to cut costs

However, there is no point in waiting until the long legislative procedure has run its course before creating new apprenticeships. This is why appeals to the sense of responsibility of Swiss firms have come from every conceivable corner of the political scene. Businesses often put cost-saving before training apprentices, who have to spend two days a week away from their jobs at trade school. They prefer to employ qualified staff who have been trained by other firms – which may certainly be considered an irresponsible attitude to the economy and society as a whole. So it is by no means surprising that voices are being raised in favour of taxing all such “profiteers” and using the proceeds to help companies which are prepared to train apprentices. Another proposal would be to reward firms willing to train young people with tax breaks.

Quite apart from such ideas, however, the apprentice system must be adapted to the changed requirements of the economy. For example it would be a good thing to shorten the long list of professions to enable less specialised base training to be carried out – since too much specialisation limits the opportunities of young people when it finally comes to getting a job. But, over and above all this, the most important thing is to raise the status of vocational training, which – quite unjustly – is widely regarded as inferior to attending university. ■



Sound training of apprentices remains one of the main attractions of Switzerland as a business location. (Photo: Keystone)

Now that this problem has hit large Swiss-German cities like Zurich and Basle, big-time politics has finally recognised the deep-seated difficulties which the apprenticeship system is facing. During parliament's summer session the government was bombarded with urgent appeals on the matter. President of the Confederation and Economics Minister Jean-Pascal Delamuraz answered soothingly that the situation was “tense but not dramatic”. This was a guarded assessment,

change in mentality. Very few of them still harbour an illusion of finding their dream job just a few steps from home. Most now realise quite well that they are unlikely to find a good training position if they are not prepared to be both flexible and mobile.

It is true that in both office work and in engineering the situation is at present difficult, but there are fields which offer perfectly attractive opportunities for those choosing a profession. For example, there is no lack of apprentice-