

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

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1981)

Heft: 1777

Rubrik: Education in Switzerland

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Private schools play a vital role

IN A country like Switzerland, where state schools are of a very high standard, the question is often raised whether private schools are really necessary.

Why do we need private schools when the state looks after children from a very young age right up to their "baccalaureat", when state education is almost free up to the compulsory schooling age limit, when every child can do whatever studies he wants, provided he has the necessary aptitudes and intelligence?

It may seem almost a paradox to say that Swiss private schools are better known abroad than in Switzerland. However, there are many reasons for their existence.

We must not forget that if we welcome a very large number of pupils of all nationalities it is because they have various but very definite reasons for coming to Switzerland. Among them:

□ It provides a healthy social climate, unaffected by racial, political and religious disputes.

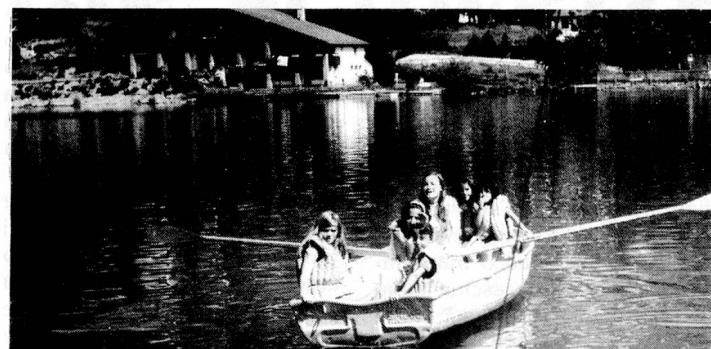
□ It provides an excellent climate and opportunities for tourism.

□ It provides a programme of schooling which allows children to continue studies begun in their own country, while learning one of several foreign languages, in particular French, German or Italian.

□ Last, but not least, it provides an opportunity to study in a country reputed for its political stability and democratic ideals.

These are the essential factors which have always prompted parents to entrust their son or daughter to us for a period of schooling.

There are also other more intimate reasons why certain



Swiss schools provide an opportunity for tourism

parents, Swiss and non-Swiss, choose a private school for their children. These can range from the state of health of the child to a change of domicile, which can mean the child must suddenly adapt to another education programme.

There may also be a desire to find a favourable environment, or it may be because the child has had to interrupt his studies for one reason or another.

However that may be, the need for private schools in Switzerland is undeniable. Moreover they have never claimed that they are a substitute for official state schools.

They do not try to compete with State schools. On the contrary they complement them very satisfactorily. They work very closely with the Swiss official education system and all questions of co-ordination concerning education and instruction are discussed on a Federal and cantonal or commune level.

There are two main categories of educational institutions in Switzerland, day schools and boarding schools. There are more of the first than of the second.

Boarding schools for boys and girls have the same purpose – to help the adolescents who are entrusted to them to develop "without tears" into well-balanced adults. The

methods and goals differ while offering an infinite variety of possibilities. They range from the finishing school to English or American Education programmes, including preparation for higher education or a profession, with diplomas which are recognised in Switzerland and in many other countries.

The Swiss Federation of Private Schools, which has a membership of almost 150, is the only professional association representing the interests of private education at a federal level. It is therefore the only one which can give parents valid advice.

The 28,000 or so pupils who attend private schools at the present time and the very carefully worked out variety of services the schools offer are the surest guarantees and the most tangible proof of the value of private schools in Switzerland.

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