

Performance audit of teacher training for vocational training schools

Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training

Key facts

In order to teach, the teaching staff of vocational training schools must undergo specific teacher training. In Switzerland, the Swiss Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (SFIVET) is the expert organisation for this training. It is owned by the Confederation and has its headquarters in Zollikofen, with activities in all three language regions. In 2017, the SFIVET employed more than 170 full-time equivalent staff. Its annual budget is approximately CHF 46.5 million, of which CHF 40 million is covered by a federal contribution.

Some of the courses offered by the SFIVET are also offered by universities of teacher education (UTES) in German-speaking Switzerland. UTEs do not receive funding from the Confederation for training activities. The Swiss Federal Audit Office (SFAO) examined whether the SFIVET's offer for the study programme which leads to the diploma for teaching vocational subjects is competitive with that of the UTEs. The training courses of the various providers are all judged to be of good quality. Compared to the SFIVET, the cost per student for the German-speaking region of Switzerland is between 15% and 40% lower in the UTEs. However, the costs presented by the different institutions are not fully comparable and the causes of the discrepancies could not be quantified.

Being attentive to the efficiency of the resources used and to variations in student satisfaction

There are significant cost differences between the three SFIVET regions. Measures will have to be taken by the SFIVET to ensure the economical use of public funds. At the same time, the Confederation must put in place stronger incentives.

In addition, the need for infrastructure needs to be examined. The current SFIVET premises are underused, difficult to reach by public transport or not very suitable for teaching. The SFAO believes that in order to limit costs and benefit from modern and well-located infrastructure, it would be advisable to rent existing rooms, in universities or other institutions, rather than to retain infrastructure of its own.

The Confederation measures the quality of the SFIVET's training based on the level of student satisfaction. The results of the satisfaction questionnaires show significant differences between language regions. In 2017/18, this level for German and Italian-speaking Switzerland was rated from "satisfactory" to "good". For French-speaking Switzerland, on the other hand, the assessment was closer to "barely sufficient". The SFIVET must analyse the causes of these regional variations and take action. The Confederation is responsible for ensuring that the required quality level is achieved in all language regions.

Objectives set by the Confederation encourage competition with the cantons

The Confederation has set the SFIVET the objective of having the largest market share in Switzerland for the diploma in vocational teaching. Considering the other actors offering this training in German-speaking Switzerland, as well as the tendency of students to favour a local institution, the SFIVET operates three sites in this region to have a maximum number of students. This situation gives rise to competition. During the drafting of the Federal Act on Vocational and Professional Education and Training, the Federal Council had expressed the view that in the event of valid regional offers, the SFIVET should seek collaboration or withdraw. This is not reflected in the law that the legislator finally enacted, which in principle does not exclude permanent and inefficient competitive situations. The Confederation signed declarations of intent to strengthen cooperation with the cantons of Lucerne and St Gallen. In contrast, negotiations with the canton of Zurich have not yet been concluded.

The SFIVET has concluded several collaboration agreements with training institutions for the implementation of a supplementary certificate in vocational teaching. The financial conditions set out in its agreements are not identical, which leads to unequal treatment between the different partners.

Original text in French