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Artistic education in state schools in Switzerland
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I - Different types of state education in Switzerland

In any study of state education in Switzerland, mention must be made of the differences between one canton and another. The cantons are, in fact, completely independent in this respect, since the federal laws merely stipulate that they must provide adequate primary education. Thus, we find the schools of the 25 divisions of the Confederation reflecting their geographical and economic differences, as well as differences of language, religion and history.

For example, the duration of compulsory schooling varies from 7 to 9 years, and the number of weeks for school attendance during the year varies between 26 in the cantons of Grisons and Valais and 39 in the cantons of Berne, Zurich and some others. Some cantonal educational regulations, e.g. those of Grisons and Appenzell, also leave the communes free to organize compulsory schooling as they wish, with reference to local geographical factors. Thus, in a number of cantons with a predominantly alpine agriculture, the schools are open only during the winter terms.

It is against this background that we should consider the teaching of drawing. It would obviously be unfair to take the short hours devoted to this subject as an indication of neglect. It should, rather, be pointed out that the canton of Valais, for instance, despite difficulties due to the fact that its communes are widely scattered throughout isolated valleys, where living conditions are often precarious, nevertheless provides instruction in drawing throughout the whole period of compulsory education.

II - Instruction in the visual arts

This report is based on a study of the syllabuses in force in primary and secondary schools and "high schools" ("écoles moyennes supérieures") in 23 cantons, and on a knowledge of the methods and theories at present applied by teachers in German Switzerland.

The report will deal in particular with the teaching of drawing, which, in Switzerland, is the chief factor in artistic education.

Number of lessons per week

The figures given in the attached table refer only to actual drawing lessons, and not to the lessons in geometrical or technical drawing which are normally given in the higher classes of all schools, being either compulsory or optional, according to the school.

(1) Kindergartens

In kindergartens, drawing, together with design, modelling, weaving and other manual crafts, forms an integral part of a general syllabus, which is not divided into subjects.

(2) Primary Schools

Except in a few cantons, the syllabus does not provide for special drawing lessons in the first 2-3 forms. On the contrary, the syllabus states that, at this stage, drawing, design and modelling shall be taught jointly with other subjects, such as geography, language, writing etc.

(3) Secondary Schools

There are, as a rule, two drawing lessons per week.

(4) High Schools (Ecoles moyennes supérieures)

The table gives only the maximum number of compulsory drawing lessons, which varies considerably from one faculty to another. Generally speaking, more time is devoted to drawing on the science and technical sides than on the arts side. On the commercial side, drawing is not taught at all. Some schools, on the other hand, provide optional courses in drawing and the history of art, e.g. Neuchâtel, St. Gall and Basle. At the Basle high school, pupils with a talent for drawing can, if they wish, take lessons.

III.- Aims and Syllabuses

A. Introduction

Official syllabuses can, of course, give no more than an approximate idea of the methods applied in the various schools, and the results obtained.

The fact that the initiative is left to the teacher, who is not subject to strict supervision, makes for personal, live teaching.

Nevertheless, since the syllabuses are drawn up by experts and specialists, they do give some indication of the general principles followed and the methods applied.

How faithfully the syllabuses reflect the present position in general education depends on when they were drawn up. In this respect, conditions in Switzerland are favourable: 38 syllabuses were drawn up in 1940, 14 in 1930, and only 3 prior to that date. The oldest of all dates back to 1905.

Selection of the factors common to most school syllabuses is facilitated by the fact that certain theories and methods are common to all. It is these common factors which we shall endeavour to bring out, concentrating chiefly, in accordance with the purpose of the seminar, on primary and secondary schools.

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B. Aims

A study of the aims pursued by various syllabuses shows general agreement on the following three points:

(1) the teaching of drawing should develop the creative faculties of the pupil, and stimulate his imagination;

(2) the teaching of drawing should train the pupil's power of observation, and visual memory, and his ability to represent objectively what he sees;

(3) the teaching of drawing should awaken the pupil's appreciation of beauty, and form his artistic taste.

C. Principles of Teaching

We give below some of the main principles laid down in almost all syllabuses:

(1) To aim both to develop the creative faculty of the pupil and, at the same time, to train his powers of observation, is not considered inconsistent. On the contrary: we are convinced that, by training the child's power of observation and helping him to represent nature more and more objectively, we shall enable him to advance from the naive artistic activity of the infant stage to the more conscious activity of maturity.

(2) Methods used in the teaching of drawing are based on children's drawings.

The syllabuses of a number of cantons, including Berne, St. Gall (secondary), Thurgau (secondary), Lucerne (primary) and Geneva (primary), express this theory very clearly.

(3) The transition from naive childish drawings to mature artistic creation is effected in accordance with psychological laws, not necessarily corresponding to the age of the pupil.

We find this idea very strongly expressed in the cantonal syllabuses for Solothurn (primary), St. Gall, Obwalden (primary), Nidwalden, Berne and Geneva (primary).

(4) The intermediary stage consists of drawing from memory, involving direct observation of the object with a view to reproducing it from memory.

Drawing from memory is also a means of preparation for drawing from life.

D. Syllabuses for various Classes1. General remarks

It is in the degree of rigidity of their directives that the differences between the various cantonal syllabuses are most marked. Some

Some of these syllabuses moreover still bear sporadic traces of adherence to old traditions.

Some cantons confine themselves to stating the aims of teaching and giving a few directives regarding method.

Few of them contain binding directives regarding the subjects to be treated, since the theory that everything can serve as a subject for drawing at all ages is fairly widely held.

2. Compulsory regulations in some cantons

Some syllabuses still require the use in the teaching of elementary drawing of geometrical figures such as the square, the triangle, etc. (Schaffhausen, Thurgau, Aargau, and Schwyz).

Other syllabuses prescribe drawing from life above the first 2 or 3 primary forms, but most of them prescribe only drawing from memory up to the fifth form.

All syllabuses, for both psychological and practical reasons, devote most time, in the higher forms, to object drawing and drawing from life.

The majority of syllabuses (all except four) prescribe "free drawing" or imaginative drawing of all kinds up to the highest forms (illustrations, fairy-tales, inventions and composition based on observed or imaginary motifs).

The following syllabuses particularly stress this point:

Zurich (Senior Modern Secondary School), Bern, Lucerne (Secondary), Schwyz, Odwalden, Basle-town and Basle-country, Appenzell A.Rh., St. Gall (Secondary), Solothurn, Aargau (Secondary), Thurgau (Secondary).

It should be mentioned also that design holds an important place in almost all syllabuses, since it develops the artistic taste and imagination of the pupil.

Many syllabuses recommend the use of various processes such as pasting, cutting out, modelling, etc. in order to develop the imagination, invention and sense of composition.

E. Aims and Syllabuses of High Schools

In these schools, we find widely divergent views on aims and methods.

We shall confine ourselves here to stating that, of the 10 syllabuses we received, a large proportion mentioned the desirability of giving the pupil an opportunity to exercise his imagination and initiative.

IV - Drawing for Boys and Girls

Although, generally speaking, the same number of lessons is prescribed for both girls and boys (c.f. attached table) there are 5 cantons

where fewer lessons are provided for girls.

In principle, the aims of teaching are the same for both sexes, but many syllabuses, especially for the upper forms, assert that girls' education should be adapted to their needs, that they should pay particular attention to design.

Before concluding, we should mention two factors especially favourable to the teaching of drawing in Switzerland.

Firstly the revival of ancient folk-art, applied art and peasant craft (pottery, hand-weaving, ironwork), which both act as a stimulus and supply models for designing in many schools.

And secondly, the influence of an active group of specialists and enthusiastic art-teachers which has made itself felt during the second quarter of the present century.

Those men, fired by the idea of opening up to the youth of the country a paradise hitherto unknown, nurtured the seeds sown in Switzerland at the time of Rousseau and Pestalozzi, and introduced ideas from abroad. Deeply interested in child-psychology, they used both their own experience and that of their colleagues abroad to build up a system, the effects of which are still clearly felt today.

Syllabuses based on these methods have been drawn up. Inspired by the work of those pioneers in launching the "new drawing" methods, similar experiments came to be made throughout the country, with the result that these new ideas exercised a strong influence on those responsible for drawing up a balanced school curricula.

Mention should be made of one international institution which has made an important contribution to the development of artistic education not only in Switzerland but in other countries as well: the Institut International pour l'Education du Dessin Infantin in Zürich, which has a very large collection of drawings from many countries, and which is known for the exhibitions it has organized in a number of capitals throughout the world.

TABLE OF WEEKLY DRAWING LESSONS

Cantons	+/	Primary School									Secondary School					High School									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	Lower			Upper		10	11	12	13	
Zurich	8	&	&	&	2	2	2	2	2	∅	∅	∅	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	
Berna	9	&	&	&	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
Lucerne	8	&	&	&	2	2	2	2	2	∅	∅	∅	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	1	2	2	-	
Uri	7	&	&	1	1	1	(1-2)	∅	∅	∅	∅	2	2	2-3	∅	∅	2	2	2-3	2	2	-	-		
Schwyz	7	&	&	1	1	2	2	2	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	2	2	no information									
Obwalden	7	&	&	&	2	2	2	2	∅	∅ ^a	∅	∅	∅	2	2	∅	2	1	1	1	1	1	-	-	
Nidwalden	7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	∅	∅	∅	∅	2	2 ^b	∅	∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	
Glaris	9	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2				∅						
Zug	8	&	&	&	1	1	(2/1)	)	∅	∅	∅	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	
Freibourg	9	1/2	1/2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1/2	2	2	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	1	1	1		
Solothurn	8-9	&	&	2	2	2	2	2	2	(2)	∅	∅	2	1 ^{1/2}	1	∅	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	
Basle-Town	8	&	&	&	2	2	2	2	2	∅	2	2	2	2	∅	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2		
Basle-Country	8	&	&	&	1-2	2	(1-2)	)	∅	∅	(	1-2	)	∅	2	2	2	2				∅		
Schaffhausen	8	&	&	&	1-2	2	2	2	2	o	o	2	2	2	2	∅	-	-	-	2	2	2	2		
Appenzell-J-Rh.	7	&	&	&	&	(2/1)	)	∅	∅	no information														
Appenzell-A-Rh.	8	&	&	&	(1-2)	)	∅	∅	∅	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	2 ^o	-			
St. Gall	8	&	&	&	(1)	)	2	2	∅	∅	∅	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	
Grisons	8-9	&	&	&	2	2	2	2	(2)	∅	∅	2	2	2	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	2	2	2	2		
Aargau	8	(1 ^{1/2}))	2	2	(1 ^{1/2}))	∅	∅	(1 ^{1/2})	∅	∅	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	-	-
Thurgau	9	&	&	&	2	2	2	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	-	-	
Ticino	8	7	6	5	5	5	(3/2)	)	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	3	1/4	1/4	3	3	2	1	1	
Vaud	9	(	3/2	)	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	∅	(4/2)	)	∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-
Valais	8	(1/0)	)	1	1	1	1	1	1	∅	variable			∅	1	2	2	1	1	1	-	-		
Neuchâtel	9	∅	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2-3				∅	∅	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	-		
Geneva	9	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	∅	∅	∅	2	2	∅	∅	2/0	2	2	2	2	-	-	

Key

- +/ = Compulsory education, number of years' schooling
- ∅ = neither schools nor classes
- = no drawing lessons
- 2/1 = number of lessons for boys/girls
- a = no drawing lessons for girls
- b = technical drawing included
- o = optional