



Earn While You Learn:

Switzerland's Vocational Education and Training System

A Model for Apprenticeships in the United States



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Ambassador's Foreword

“Spreading awareness of Switzerland’s vocational education and training system should eventually benefit Swiss companies abroad in their efforts to ensure a sustainable, skilled talent pool.”



Over the past few years, Switzerland has repeatedly ranked first in the “Global Innovation Index”. Quality and innovation are two characteristics our country is known for. To this day, the famous “Swiss made” trademark stands for those qualities.

For many of Switzerland’s small- and medium-sized enterprises, the ability to innovate is crucial for staying internationally competitive. One way to boost a company’s innovation capacity is to invest in research and development. Another way is to emphasize the quality of education and to incentivize talent and mobility across borders. A skilled and diverse workforce brings new ideas and different perspectives to a work environment, again fostering innovation.

The same conditions apply to Swiss companies in the United States. When expanding their operations abroad, having a skilled workforce available at their location is a crucial factor in investment decisions as well as in global competitiveness and success. It helps to preserve jobs in Switzerland as well.

Switzerland is the seventh largest foreign investor in the U.S. and creates close to half a million jobs—an important driver for the bilateral relations between our two countries. Spreading awareness of Switzerland’s vocational education and training system should eventually benefit Swiss companies abroad in their efforts to ensure a sustainable, skilled talent pool.

I am proud to see that Switzerland’s vocational education and training model has found such great interest in the United States. At the Embassy of Switzerland, we liaise with government officials, the private sector, education and workforce specialists and other stakeholders to foster exchange and discussions. We are committed to sharing our expertise so that all young people will hopefully have bright prospects for their future.

Martin Dahinden
Ambassador of Switzerland to the
United States of America

Guest Forewords

“Cooperating with the United States in the realm of vocational education and training helps to strengthen appreciation for Swiss vocational education and training abroad.”



In Switzerland, vocational education and training ensures a sustainable, highly skilled talent pool. Through the combination of on-the-job training and classroom instruction, young adults get hands-on work experience and acquire industry-specific knowledge.

In a world where technological innovation, new industries and globalization constantly change the work environment, having highly qualified and skilled employees is key for economic growth. Countries all over the world have come to realize that, sparking widespread interest in the concept of dual-track models such as apprenticeships.

The Swiss apprenticeship model is unique in its setup. As part of the international cooperation efforts in the area of vocational education and training, the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation exchanges information and maintains a dialogue with countries that are interested in learning more about it.

Cooperating with the United States in the realm of vocational education and training helps to strengthen appreciation for Swiss vocational education and training abroad. In addition, it provides an opportunity to support Swiss businesses in the U.S. in finding skilled workers and to increase international visibility and recognition of Switzerland’s high-quality and labor market-relevant educational system.

Josef Widmer

Deputy Director

Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation

“The Joint Declaration and projects that follow will create new avenues for companies and workers to flourish on both sides of the Atlantic.”



Many of the employers I talk to across our country are optimistic about their future, but they often share the same concern: finding workers who possess the advanced technical skills they need. To address employers' concerns while providing ladders of opportunity for more Americans, the Obama Administration has taken unprecedented steps to elevate and expand apprenticeships in America. This effort is part of a bold challenge issued by President Obama in 2014 to double the number of Registered Apprenticeships within five years, and to ensure that earn-while-you-learn opportunities are accessible to more Americans than ever.

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Labor made a historic investment of \$175 million to 46 public-private partnerships to build on the solid foundation of apprenticeships in America and expand the model into new industries and communities. Later that year, Congress appropriated an additional \$90 million, demonstrating the bipartisan support for expanding apprenticeships.

We are committed to utilizing the best ideas from abroad—including many from Switzerland's vocational education and training system—to create a unique, modernized American apprenticeship system. This effort was exemplified in the U.S.-Switzerland Joint Declaration of Intent signed by U.S. Cabinet Secretaries Perez, Pritzker, and Duncan and Swiss Federal Councillor Schneider-Ammann in 2015.

The Joint Declaration and projects that follow will create new avenues for companies and workers to flourish on both sides of the Atlantic. As more Swiss and American companies are starting and expanding apprenticeship programs in their U.S. operations, the positive results we've already seen will only continue to abound.

There is a bright future for apprenticeships in the U.S. and Switzerland, and I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish by working together.

Eric Seleznow

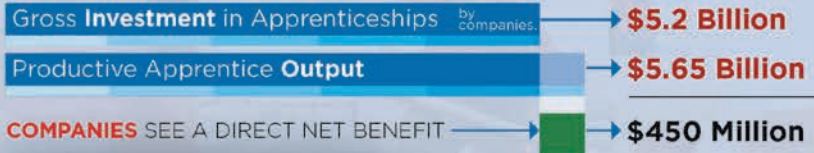
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Employment and Training
U.S. Department of Labor

STUDENTS GIVE APPRENTICESHIPS AN

A +

They join the workforce prepared thanks to a top-notch education

- ✓ A prestigious education pathway
- ✓ Flexibility regarding future career options
- ✓ Skills & knowledge align with labor market demands
- ✓ No student debt
Tuition paid by cantons (states)
Apprentices earn a progressive wage



Who benefits? Everyone.

AMONG SWISS HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES



Switzerland has one of the lowest youth unemployment rates among European countries



APPRENTICESHIPS

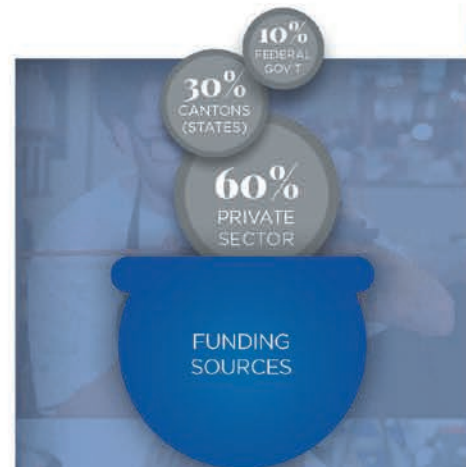
Switzerland's business-driven & labor market-oriented training system

230 TYPES OF APPRENTICESHIPS TO CHOOSE FROM

- #1 MOST POPULAR BUSINESS
- #2 MOST POPULAR RETAIL
- #3 MOST POPULAR HEALTH CARE



How does the system work?



<p>AGE 14</p> <p>CAREER COUNSELING</p>	<p>CAREER CHOICE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for apprenticeship positions in the labor market 	<p>AGE 16</p> <p>HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION</p>	<p>APPRENTICESHIP (3-4 YEARS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dual-track Approach Work based learning at host company Classes at local school 	<p>AGE 19-20</p> <p>APPRENTICESHIP GRADUATION</p>	<p>EARN FEDERAL DIPLOMA</p>	<p>THE FUTURE AWAITS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A wealth of job prospects Maximum mobility in the labor market Further education
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The Swiss Vocational Education and Training System

In countries such as Switzerland, Germany, and Austria, apprenticeships are an integral part of the educational system. Recently, the United States has shown increasing interest in learning more about the Swiss model and other European models. This brochure explains the key characteristics of the Swiss model, highlights Swiss-U.S. cooperation, and discusses current initiatives in the field.

Additional details and statistics about the Swiss vocational education and training model and the educational system as a whole can be found on the website of the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation. www.sbfi.admin.ch/berufsbildung (also available in English)

The Swiss Model in a Nutshell

In Switzerland, two-thirds of all students coming out of compulsory education decide to start their careers with vocational education and training (VET). One of the VET programs is doing an apprenticeship, which usually takes three to four years and combines classes at a vocational school with on-the-job training at a host company, where apprentices are employed. Once they have graduated, apprentices receive a federal VET diploma, which is recognized by employers all across Switzerland.

During the program, the host company pays the apprentice a salary, which increases with each completed year. The concept of earning money while still getting an education is a big incentive for future apprentices. Salaries vary for each occupational field and are lower than what regular employees would earn. Even so, the amount represents compensation for their performance and allows apprentices to have their own disposable income at a very young age.

The Swiss vocational and professional education and training system is managed as a public-private partnership: the professional organizations, the cantons (state governments) and the Swiss Confederation (federal government) have found ways to jointly define curricula, skill sets and standards for occupations throughout the country. The most important partner is the private sector. It is the companies that employ apprentices and provide on-the-job education and training. Trade associations are responsible for defining the industry-wide skill standards and training content. Therefore the VET system is very labor market-driven and based on the needs of the different industries, while the federal government ensures quality control and recognition.

The goal of vocational education and training is to educate apprentices in a broad range of skills they need to be successful in their future careers. Once apprentices have graduated from their program, they are immediately prepared to work, and employers are aware of the abilities they bring with them. A broad skill set combined with a nationally recognized diploma offers young professionals the chance to work for potentially any company. As a talent pool, apprentices are a great benefit to companies, decreasing their recruitment costs.

Another important feature of the Swiss educational system is its high degree of permeability. The system provides career prospects for everyone and delivers a basis for lifelong learning. For example, after apprentices graduate, they can earn a university degree or take additional classes (leading to further certifications) at a professional college. There are plenty of options and pathways to continue one's education or even to change one's professional field.

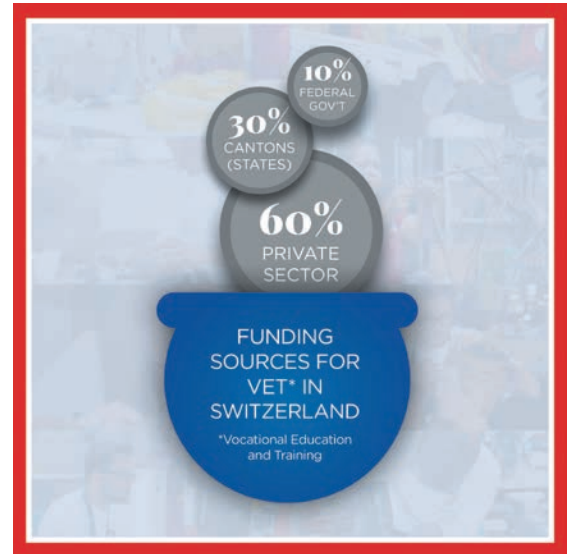
Two-thirds of Swiss students coming out of compulsory education decide to take a VET pathway.

Credit: Bühler Group, Plymouth MN



Funding of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) System

The costs of the vocational education and training system are borne by: the Swiss Confederation (federal government), the cantons (states) and the professional organizations (companies, social partners, trade associations, and so forth). The professional organizations cover the costs for training and the salaries of the apprentices and pay for intercompany courses. The cantons fund the vocational schools and career guidance services and train apprenticeship trainers. The Swiss Confederation is responsible for quality control, comparability, transparency and further development of the system as a whole.



The Challenges Facing the System Today

Swiss vocational education and training is very well organized and a successful part of the Swiss educational system in many respects. However, some challenges still remain.

On the one hand, the needs of the labor market change constantly and so does the demand for new skills. On the other hand, there are technological changes and global trends that influence the structure of a market and thereby affect the demand for talented young people. It is a challenge to keep up with the changes in the marketplace and to ensure that the skill standards and curricula are always up-to-date.

Additionally, societal changes influence the popularity of the VET system. For example, some students might perceive college and a university degree as more prestigious. Other students might not have been born and raised in Switzerland and are therefore less familiar with the concept of vocational education and training. In both situations, clarifications about the functioning of the system and the viability of VET as a career pathway are necessary. Furthermore, there are certain occupations that face more gender and equality biases than others: Switzerland, too, needs more women in IT and other STEM fields.

Last but not least, since internationalization and mobility in the labor market are increasing, more and more foreign companies are establishing branches in Switzerland. Some of those companies first need to be convinced of the VET system's advantages.

Apprenticeships are deeply rooted in Swiss society and are seen as a respected, high-quality education.

When Students Become Young Professionals

Apprenticeships in Switzerland generally target young adults who are about to graduate from high school. The timeline to the right shows that students start thinking about their future careers at the young age of 14.

With regard to career choice, students can benefit from career counseling and other career guidance services to learn about their options and find out about their professional interests. That is the point when students decide whether they want to continue with general education or whether they would like to pursue the VET pathway. If they choose the latter, one of the options is to start applying for apprenticeship positions with companies, which is a competitive process.

Upon graduation from high school—roughly at age 16—the students who have opted for an apprenticeship start their three- or four-year programs. Since apprenticeships are organized in a dual-track approach, apprentices spend one or two days per week at a vocational school, where they learn technical, methodological and social skills, and the remaining days at the host company, acquiring practical know-how through on-the-job training.

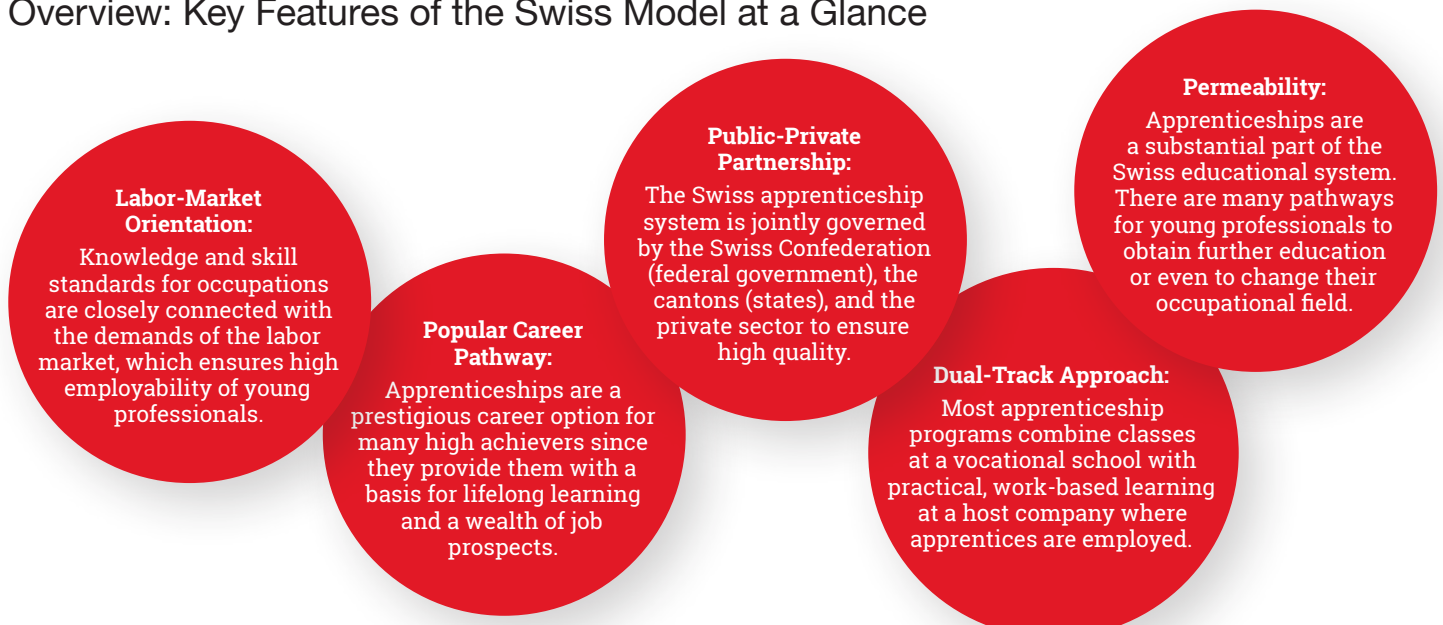
At the end of the training period, apprentices have to take a final exam. If they are successful, they graduate with a federal VET diploma, which is recognized and respected everywhere in Switzerland. It is the “entry ticket” into the job market and allows young profes-



sionals to kickstart their careers without any student debt and with hands-on work experience. In addition, the VET diploma is recognized by various institutions of higher education, where young professionals can pursue further education if they want to.

VET diploma holders are highly sought after by employers because these young professionals are trained in a large variety of skills and can be tasked with versatile jobs and responsibilities. Moreover, companies have realized that new generations of qualified workers can have a positive impact on their competitiveness and innovation capacity.

Overview: Key Features of the Swiss Model at a Glance



Swiss-U.S. Cooperation

Apprenticeships have been placed on the agenda of both the White House and Congress. The Swiss vocational education and training approach has been identified as one of the models for reforming American upper-secondary qualifications and closing the skills gap. Switzerland and the United States signed a Joint Declaration of Intent to further strengthen their cooperation in the area.

Apprenticeships and the Skills Gap

Over the past few decades, the U.S. has developed a tendency toward a “college for all” approach aimed at providing everyone with access to higher education and a college degree. On the one hand, that has led to a very well educated generation; but on the other hand, the high cost of tuition has resulted in increasing amounts of student debt for university graduates.

There is one term that lies at the core of the discussion about apprenticeships and job-driven training in the U.S.: the skills gap. It refers to the fact that many U.S.-based employers have trouble recruiting qualified workers to fill open positions because they cannot find applicants who possess the required skills in the local communities. This gap between job openings and the qualified, available workforce presents a threat to the competitiveness and growth of companies and the American economy as a whole. The aging American workforce adds another challenge to the situation. In the years to come, workers of the baby-boomer generation will retire. That will drastically decrease the overall labor participation rate and might lead to a shortage of skilled workers in the job market. Retirees will not be able to pass on their knowledge and will leave behind many jobs that have to be filled.

Both the U.S. government and the private sector have become increasingly engaged in finding solutions to the problem. The view that a college degree is the priority qualification demanded in the labor market has been challenged: at the end of the day, skills are required—and there are many ways that one can acquire them. In search of best practices, the U.S. government has turned its focus toward European countries that integrate job-driven training into their

educational systems. Switzerland and Germany have come into focus since experts believe their educational models are part of the success formula for keeping youth unemployment rates very low, even during economic downturns.

In Switzerland, vocational education and training constitute one of the reasons for the country’s economic stability and innovation capabilities. Apprenticeships provide a way for employers to build their workforce, and the concept of “earn while you learn” gives young professionals the chance to start their careers with a set of practical skills and no student debt.

In Switzerland, apprenticeships contribute to low student debt and make companies more competitive.

Zurich Insurance celebrated the launch of its insurance apprenticeship program on February 2, 2016, with the inaugural class of 24 apprentices as well as U.S. Deputy Secretary of Labor Christopher Lu, U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland Suzi LeVine, Zurich North America CEO Mike Foley and Ambassador of Switzerland to the U.S. Martin Dahinden (front, from left to right).
Credit: Zurich North America, Schaumburg IL



Widespread U.S. Interest in the Topic

Visit the Embassy of Switzerland's website and download the brochure *Gold Standard: The Swiss Vocational Education and Training System* by Nancy Hoffman and Robert Schwartz (Washington, D.C.: National Center on Education and the Economy, 2015).

The benefits of an apprenticeship are obvious. It is a very successful educational pathway, especially when it comes to preparing young people for hands-on jobs. Companies, but also federal and state agencies, researchers, educational institutions and workforce development advocates in the U.S. have come to the same conclusion and have taken great interest in what is referred to as the Swiss apprenticeship model.

Several U.S. officials have traveled to Switzerland to get a firsthand impression of the Swiss approach. Their goal was to better understand the setup of the system and to learn about its success factors to identify aspects that could be applied in the U.S. in one way or another.

Moreover, American education researchers have started to look into the setup and functioning of Switzerland's system. Some of them have acquired extensive knowledge about Swiss vocational education and training. They are publishing their findings and are pleased to share their insights. They are valuable experts and consultants for policy discussions about how the U.S. educational system could be enhanced to include apprenticeship pathways.

"The Swiss education system is the gold standard in vocational education and training for young people. Sources of its strength are that it is the mainstream system—the way most 16 to 20 year olds make the transition from schooling to working life—and it is employer driven."

Nancy Hoffman and Robert Schwartz
"Gold Standard: The Swiss Vocational
Education and Training System"

In the U.S., even though there are many different job-driven training and workforce development programs, apprenticeships are not a formalized part of the educational system as such. This aspect and other hurdles such as changing the image and perception of apprenticeships or finding ways to integrate apprenticeships into the complex college system will dominate future discussions. Hopefully Swiss-U.S. cooperation will contribute toward finding solutions to these problems.

"The Swiss program reaches far beyond America's traditional concept of vocational training as a steppingstone to blue collar jobs, giving students more flexibility to shift either among vocations or onto an academic track if they choose."

Mark Caro and Kathy Bergen
Chicago Tribune: "Chicago's Future
Hinges on Retooling Schools for Digital Age"

Dr. Nancy Hoffman is vice president for program and talent development at "Jobs for the Future" and became enthusiastic about the Swiss model while consulting for the OECD on their study, "Learning for Jobs". In the U.S., she coleads a twelve-state network attempting to adapt some of the principles of Swiss VET to the U.S. environment.

Joint Declaration of Intent on Vocational Education and Training

Recently the U.S. has shown increasing interest in learning about the Swiss model. American entrepreneurs and officials have become more familiar with the Swiss system and have identified the great potential for the labor market in the fundamental idea of combining on-the-job training with classroom instruction.

To further strengthen the cooperation between the two countries, Switzerland and the U.S. signed a Joint Declaration of Intent on vocational education and training. The signing ceremony in Washington, D.C., took place on July 9, 2015, between Swiss Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker. On September 1, 2015, U.S. Secretary of Labor Tom Perez signed the document at the signing ceremony in Bern.

“Switzerland and the U.S. cooperate by exchanging experiences, which is best done when those experiences relate to practice. Swiss companies in the U.S. offer apprenticeships the ‘Swiss way,’ which is the best basis for transferring know-how.”

Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, President of the Swiss Confederation in 2016

The Role of the Embassy of Switzerland and Swiss Representations

At the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, D.C., and the Swiss representations across the U.S., we encourage bilateral and international dialogue and promote awareness of Swiss vocational education and training. We are delighted to see that the U.S. government has placed apprenticeships on its political agenda, and we are committed to sharing Switzerland’s expertise in the area.

We liaise with the Swiss and U.S. governments, connect stakeholders and support Swiss companies doing business in the United States. Many of those companies have started apprenticeship programs inspired by the Swiss model, and some of those initiatives have even become the gold standard in their respective states. It is in the Embassy of Switzerland’s interest to help those companies find the workforce they need and train the next generation of skilled workers—it is a crucial factor in their global competitiveness.

Switzerland and the U.S. signed a Joint Declaration of Intent to strengthen their cooperation in the area of VET.

Visit the Embassy of Switzerland’s YouTube channel and watch our video about the Swiss VET model in which the President of the Swiss Confederation talks about his enthusiasm for the dual-track model.

The signing ceremony in Bern with U.S. Ambassador to Switzerland Suzi LeVine, U.S. Secretary of Labor Thomas Perez, Swiss Federal Councillor Johann Schneider-Ammann and Ambassador of Switzerland to the U.S. Martin Dahinden (from left to right). Credit: Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research

U.S. Secretary of Commerce Penny Pritzker (front left) and Swiss Federal Councillor Johann Schneider-Ammann (front right) during the signing ceremony in Washington, D.C. Credit: U.S. Department of Commerce



The Value of Apprenticeships

Vocational education and training has a long tradition in Switzerland and is deeply rooted in Swiss society and the country's educational system. Its success serves as an inspiration which—along with other factors—helps to keep student debt very low in Switzerland.

The Value to Companies

Since Switzerland is a knowledge-based country with hardly any natural resources, its main competitive advantage is its skilled workforce. Vocational education and training provides one way to ensure long-lasting availability of highly qualified and innovative employees.

Roughly 40% of all Swiss companies train apprentices. Not all companies are able to offer apprenticeship positions—mostly because they are too small or overly specialized. For the host companies, apprenticeships are a way of creating a talent pool and contributing toward the next generation of skilled workers.

It is important to note that Switzerland has an apprenticeship ecosystem. All host companies follow the same industry-specific skill standards for training their apprentices. As a consequence, they can benefit from each other: apprentices who could not be retained by one company are available in the labor market and can be recruited by another. Thanks to the standardized training content, employers are aware of the qualifications an apprenticeship graduate can offer, even if the training was done by another company. Apprenticeship diplomas are nationally recognized, which allows workers to be mobile in the labor market and to find work all across Switzerland.

The Return on Investment for Companies

The costs for host companies offering apprenticeships include: salaries paid to apprentices, costs related to providing a workplace, time invested by trainers for instructing apprentices, and recruitment and administrative costs.

At the beginning of an apprenticeship, associated costs are higher than output since apprentices still need to learn a lot. Toward the end of the program, apprentices take over many skilled tasks, require less instruction, contribute to the daily work, and have a productive output.

Apprentices earn a progressive salary, but their remuneration is lower compared with what the company would have to pay a skilled worker for the same job. In most cases, the apprentices' productive output offsets the investments made and leaves companies with a net benefit.



Samuel Muehleemann and Stefan C. Wolter, "Return on investment of apprenticeship systems for enterprises: Evidence from cost-benefit analyses." In: IZA Journal of Labor Policy (2014, 3:25). Interested readers can download this and other publications at: <http://www.izajolp.com/content/3/1/25>

Dr. Stefan C. Wolter, head of the Centre for Research in Economics of Education at the University of Bern and chair of the expert group on vocational education and training of the OECD in Paris, has done extensive research on the topic of return on investment. He has published several books about the cost-benefit ratios of apprenticeship training for host companies in Switzerland.

Advantages for Companies after the Training Period

Companies often use apprenticeships as a strategy for recruiting their future workforce. They retain the most suitable apprentices and hire them as regular employees. If the company did not achieve a net benefit from training beforehand, chances are that it will at this point.

Apprenticeships can serve as a trial period. If an apprentice is hired after completing the program, the employer already knows it is a good match and can save additional recruitment costs. Overall, a better qualified workforce leads to higher productivity as well as better innovation capabilities. Apprentices bring new input, up-to-date knowledge and creativity to the workplace, which can lead to new, innovative ideas.

Even if the apprentices cannot be retained, training apprentices might have a positive influence on external recruitment options. Offering apprenticeships is said to increase a company's reputation and is a sign of good working conditions. That improves an employer's image and results in more and better-quality applicants for job vacancies.



Uschi Backes-Gellner, "Benefits of Apprenticeship Training and Future Challenges – Empirical Results and Lessons from Switzerland and Germany." In: Swiss Leading House Working Paper Series (No. 97, 2014). Interested readers can download this and other publications at: www.educationeconomics.uzh.ch/en/Publikationen.html

Dr. Uschi Backes-Gellner is the director of the Swiss Leading House on Economics of Education, Firm Behaviour and Training Policies at the University of Zurich. She is an expert in the area of economics of apprenticeship training and particularly the benefits companies derive from training apprentices.

Professional organizations play an important role in the Swiss VET system; its labor-market orientation is crucial to its success.

At the Embassy of Switzerland's annual event, the Soirée Suisse, three apprentices received a Tell Award for their host companies' achievements in successfully implementing workforce development programs modeled after the Swiss apprenticeship system. From left to right: Derek Boyd (Feintool apprentice), Dylan Trojanowski (Daetwyler apprentice), Mike Schweizer (Bühler Group apprentice)
Credit: FDFA / Embassy of Switzerland in Washington, D.C., 2014



Company Profiles

Having identified the need for skilled workers a long time ago, several Swiss companies have established their own apprenticeship programs in the United States.

Those apprenticeship pioneers have worked together with local community colleges to establish teaching curricula. They interact with the community to convince students and their parents of the advantages of apprenticeship programs and actively encourage business partners and other companies to offer similar programs. Here are a few examples of Swiss companies in the U.S. that offer apprenticeship programs inspired by the Swiss model:

Max Daetwyler Corporation, Huntersville, NC: In 1995, Daetwyler Corporation cofounded Apprenticeship 2000—an apprenticeship program with the goal of training the next generation of skilled craftsmen. The program takes four years and leads to an associate's degree in mechatronics as well as a journeyman's certificate issued by the North Carolina Department of Commerce. The program combines on-the-job training with classroom instruction, giving apprentices technical knowledge and practical work experience at the same time. Daetwyler offers all its graduates a job once they complete the apprenticeship.

Bühler Group, Plymouth, MN: Bühler has set up what they call the Bühler Apprenticeship Academy, through which they train young apprentices to become customer service engineers. It is a three-year program and, like most programs, it follows a dual-track structure, offering technical instruction in the form of college classes together with on-the-job training. Bühler invests heavily in their apprentices since the company pays for their wages, college tuition, tools, books, computers and uniforms.

Bühler Aeroglide, Cary, NC: Like other Swiss companies, Bühler Aeroglide is also a founding member of a local apprenticeship program called North Carolina Triangle Apprenticeship Program (NCTAP). In addition to Bühler Aeroglide, there are a number of other local companies that offer apprenticeship positions in advanced manufacturing as part of NCTAP. The apprenticeship program combines classes at a community college with on-the-job training. At the end of the program, graduates receive an associate's degree in mechanical engineering and a journeyman's certificate issued by the North Carolina Department of Commerce.

Feintool, Cincinnati, OH, and Nashville, TN: Feintool offers a four-year toolmaker apprenticeship. The program was started in Cincinnati in 1988, and by 2015, a total of

Many Swiss companies are leaders in introducing Swiss-inspired apprenticeship programs into the U.S. labor market.

38 apprentices had graduated from Feintool's program. In addition to their training at the workplace, apprentices take classes at the local technical college. The program follows the U.S. Department of Labor's apprenticeship standards and is approved by the State of Ohio. Many former apprentices are still with Feintool today—they hold various positions and significantly contribute to the company's leading position in fineblanking technology. Recently Feintool Tennessee set up a sister apprentice program for toolmakers at its plant in Antioch, near Nashville, where more technical experts are required due to the growth of the company.

Zurich Insurance, Schaumburg, IL: Zurich Insurance established a first-of-its-kind U.S. apprenticeship program for the insurance industry that resembles a program that has been successful for many years at its Switzerland headquarters. The commercial property-casualty insurer in the U.S. seeks to train 100 student workers by 2020 and aims to bring new entrants of all ages into the insurance industry workforce by building a talent pipeline. Zurich is working with William Rainey Harper College to educate and train people with an interest in becoming an insurance professional, focusing on underwriting and claims, areas core to Zurich's business.

Nestlé, United States: As part of an initiative called Project Opportunity, Nestlé is committed to expanding its apprenticeship program from 20 to 137 apprentices across 31 of its Nestlé factories in the United States. Nestlé's initiative will offer an up to three-year program that combines on-the-job and coursework-based training for electrical and controls technicians and maintenance mechanics. The goal of the apprenticeship program is to help people of all ages gain work experience and strengthen their professional development skills in food and beverage manufacturing.

SFS Group, Medina, OH: SFS Intec offers unique apprenticeship opportunities in its U.S. automotive division: tool and die maker, machine repairer-maintenance, precision machinist and production machining specializing in cold forming technology. After graduating from the program, an apprentice will have a one-year technical certification from a partner college and will be well over 50% toward the completion of an associate's degree in industrial technology or a related technical field. Through the apprenticeship program, SFS Intec is addressing technical and occupational gaps by growing its own talent.

Visit the [Embassy of Switzerland's website](#) and watch the [video about the Swiss vocational education and training model](#) and see apprentices in action!

On the occasion of the signing of the Joint Declaration of Intent on Vocational Education and Training between Switzerland and the U.S., several Swiss companies committed themselves to setting up apprenticeship programs in the United States. The above list as of December 2015 is not exhaustive.

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About the Content

The content of this brochure presents the most current information on Swiss-U.S. cooperation in vocational education and training at the time of publication.

Sources

Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (2015): "Vocational and professional education and training in Switzerland – Facts and figures 2015"
"The Global Innovation Index 2015": www.globalinnovationindex.org

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