

Six Years of Continuing Education at Swiss Universities: Evaluation and Future Perspectives

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Abstract: Between 1990 and 1996, Continuing education at Swiss universities has been encouraged by impulse subsidies from the Federal government. The impact of these subsidies is presented and confronted to some empirical results about who are the users of continuing education. The findings indicate a strong integration of continuing education in the general mechanisms of unequal distribution of social goods. Practical and strategic implications are briefly discussed.

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Since 1990, an impulse programme of the Federal Government has been running in Switzerland in order to encourage continuing education at the universities by way of subsidies. After a short presentation of the programme, a sketch of its effects and of the present perspectives is developed.

1. About my vantage point

The title of this contribution is not really modest; it seems to announce a complete overview of the development of continuing education in Swiss universities after six years of impulse subsidies. I cannot possibly do this, and where it only for lack of the final information to this day (october 1996). What I can do is to advance some provisional elements of such a balance.

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To put up a balance means taking stock and evaluating realisations and failures according to explicit criteria. Despite the distance taken, no observer can help observing from a more or less well-defined *position* which will be reflected less in the description of the facts than in the judgement about the very relevance of the facts and dimensions chosen for the description. Many standpoints come to mind from which academic continuing education may legitimately be observed and judged, even if one considers only institutional ones (others could be, e.g., less institutionalised value or interest positions). Producers have undoubtedly another position, other objectives, preferences and valuations than participants, but many other positions also exist: other producers (i.e. competitors), university authorities, professors and other potential teachers of continuing education, politicians with legislative or executive functions (and not only those who are specialised in matters of education!), professionals of continuing education from a pedagogic point of view - and there are certainly more standpoints from which still other, equally interesting views can and should be taken.

As regards this presentation, I conceive it largely from the point of view of a producer of academic continuing education who nevertheless is not willing to forget his main profession as a sociologist. This will mean concretely that I shall

- focus on academic continuing education,
- not consider once more the social desirability or even necessity of continuing education, but just assume it,
- proceed first in an analytical-descriptive vein (past and present situation, future perspectives) and then change to a more political-normative one (strategies),
- consider continuing education as a part of the social production and distribution of knowledge and skills in general.

I leave it to the readers to figure out what could have been different had the same exercise been undertaken from another position...

With respect to the *criteria*, I limit myself to very simple indicators of quantitative development.

As a beginning it may be useful to delineate briefly the institutional framework within which my topic is located.

2. The federal impulse program in the context of the Swiss university system

2.1 The institutional structure of the Swiss educational system

In comparison with other European states, including those with a federalist structure, the Swiss educational system stays apart for its being extremely decentralised, on lower levels as well as on the academic level. The sovereignty of the federated states (cantons) has been preserved in hardly any area as much as in this one. Thus, it is not exaggerated to say that Switzerland has practically as many educational systems as it has cantons, i.e. twenty-six. The situation on the academic level is characterised by the fact that the classical universities function with cantonal resources and depend on cantonal authorities whereas the two technical universities are run by the federal state with its proper means. Seven of the 26 cantons have their own university, most of them since the 19th century (with the exception of Basle and Geneva). An eighth canton, St. Gallen, has created an economic university - it should rather be called a monoversity - in the sixties. Thus, all in all, there are 10 universities in Switzerland in the period we shall consider here. All of them are either German or French speaking; a new one, with a less than complete array of faculties, has just been opened in the Italian speaking canton of Ticino.

The sympathy for education, especially for its academic level, is quite different and historically variable among legislative politicians; generally, it seems to be more pronounced on the federal level than on the cantonal one. Moreover, due to its larger scope and specialisation, the federal administration can count on professionalised actors of scientific policy more easily than the cantonal ones. These are two of the reasons why federal activities and initiatives in university matters (not only of the two technical ones, directly run by the Confederation) are quite significant despite the cantonal sovereignty in that area. Among others, there is a more or less strict division of labour in the sense that public subsidies for academic research comes only from the Confederation, the university cantons limit themselves to finance teaching and the infrastructure, and get some financial compensation by the other cantons who send them their students. The Confederation can encourage other academic activities by help of special measures (provided they are accepted by Parliament).

It is easy to imagine that in such a context the landscape of institutional actors in the area of science policy is complex. The university cantons are represented by their ministers of public education in a national conference for the universities (Schweizerische Hochschulkonferenz, Conférence universitaire suisse) which has functions of co-ordination between universities and of representation vis-à-vis the federal state. On the latter's side, the federal agency of education and science (Bundesamt für Bildung und Wissenschaften, Office fédéral de l'éducation et de la science) is the main "contracting party" of the universities and their cantons. The situation of the two technical universities is different as they are directed and financed, on a parallel

line so to speak, by way of a "school council", by a secretary of state for science and research who depends directly on the federal minister of the interior. The same ministry houses also the Swiss national foundation (Schweizerisches Nationalfonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung, Fonds national suisse de la recherche scientifique) which is in charge of subsidising scientific research much like the German DFG. A last institution to be mentioned in this context is the Swiss council for science (Schweizerischer Wissenschaftsrat, Conseil suisse de la science) which has mainly a counselling function for the federal government in matters of science policy.

2.2 The federal impulse program for continuing education

After a prehistory that I shall not comment, the federal Parliament accepted in 1989 an impulse program that aims at favouring the development of professional and academic continuing education as well as the diffusion of CIM (computer integrated manufacturing) mainly in smaller firms. I shall treat only the academic program since the other parts are very different and my experiences concern only this one.

In the context of this program it was possible to finance, on the one hand, centres of continuing education in the universities (salaries and part of the current expenses), on the other hand part of the courses. The latter had to be recommended by an expert commission on the basis of a number of fixed, formal criteria and of some other, less formalised ones of more pedagogical, substantive and strategic content.² The decisional process reflects the complexity of university policy in Switzerland: the expert commission was instituted by the intercantonal conference for the universities, the final decisions were taken by the federal agency of education and science which also administrates the funds.

The program was clearly conceived as an impulse or initiating action with the aim to establish continuing education as a principal activity of the universities that should, in the long run, be integrated into their current budgets. The initial program lasted from 1990 to 1996, the last courses have been decided upon at the end of 1995; the last of the accepted ones will start in 1997 or 1998. The part of the program subsidising the centres has been prolonged on a degressive basis to facilitate their transfer to

² The initial fund reserved for the six years' duration of the program amounted to 75 million francs; it was cut to 45 million by subsequent economy measures. The *formal criteria* required an orientation towards specialisation, acquiring interdisciplinary or new scientific knowledge, or the professional reintegration especially of women, an explicit and detailed program, an organisation allowing to follow the courses while maintaining a professional activity, and a minimum of 40 hours and 10 participants. *Additional criteria* where the substantial and practical relevance, the coordination between universities, and a reasonable rate of direct financing by the participants.

the regular budgets, i.e. from the federal to the cantonal level; they will have decreased to zero in 2000.

The cantons with universities have reacted differently to this federal initiative, as their universities were differently prepared for this new task. Only few cantons decided straightaway to develop this new activity (especially Bern), others restricted themselves, for structural or conceptual reasons, to create minimal structures allowing to receive subsidies (e.g. Neuchâtel and Fribourg, but also Basle and Zurich). However, all of them participated in one way or another, and a certain dynamism developed in all the classical universities. In the economic university of St. Gall, the situation was different as it had been developing continuing education in its field for quite some time as a self-financing activity. Still another situation held for the two technical universities. They have their own financial regime and developed preferentially post-graduate courses which they were able to finance massively with their own funds - which however did not hinder them to also develop continuing education. In the latter three cases (St. Gall and the two technical universities), there existed well-functioning centres for continuing education already before the impulse program set in. None of the university cantons accepted explicitly an obligation to integrate this new activity in its financial plans. This is why in the actual phase of transition, in a period of very tense cantonal and federal finances, there is quite some uncertainty as to the future of the centres that have been created. Several of them are under strong pressure toward partial or integral self-financing.

3. Continuing education at universities and the impulse programme

3.1 Overview

It is impossible to present a complete retrospective picture of the development of continuing education in the Swiss universities for simple lack of information; even for the last ten years, such an enterprise would require an effort that nobody has made up to now. Thanks to a recent microcensus and some other studies we have gained some nation-wide knowledge about the development of the offer and also about its utilisation; concerning the *offer*, this knowledge is limited to those courses that have been subsidised by the federal impulse program, concerning the *utilisation*, what we know refers only to the beginning of the nineties and allows only for little detail about academic continuing education.

I first give a sketch of the development of the offer of academic continuing education under the regime of that programme, then proceed to a short analysis of the public reached by these courses in the case of Lausanne, and finally discuss some findings

about the social utilisation of this relatively novel phenomenon in the area of education in general.

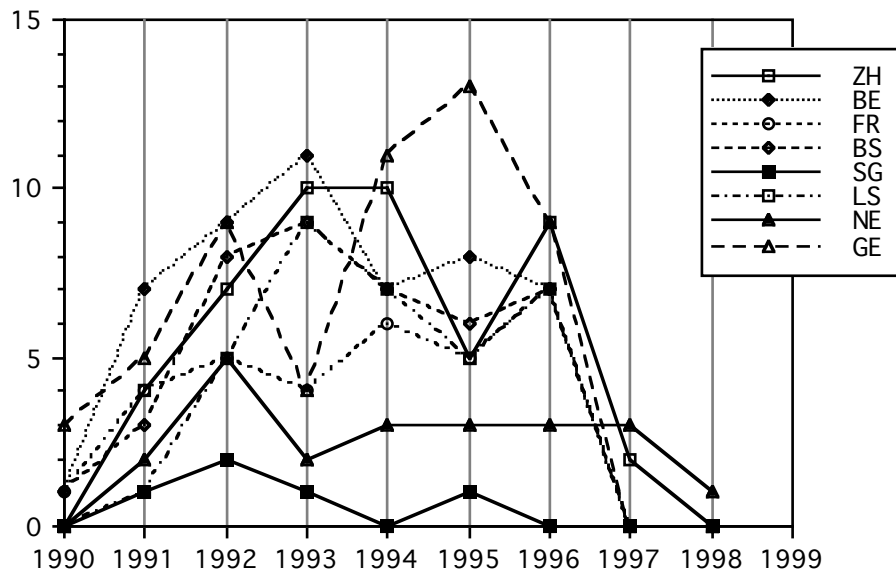
In the project of its final report (that is still in the process of being worked out by the expert commission of the Swiss conference for the universities at the moment of writing these lines), there is an overall statement that evaluates quite positively the effects of the impulse programme. I largely agree with it and wish to quote it: "The Confederation's impulse programme has been successful at all cantonal universities and has led to the hoped-for extension of continuing education. On the one hand, it has been possible to create centres for continuing education at these universities relatively quickly, simultaneously and in a co-ordinated way, and to equip them with personnel and the necessary infrastructure. On the other hand, the federal funds helped produce 285 complementary courses by the end of 1995 in a great variety of disciplines. (These courses have reached more than 6700 participants. - Complement and translation RL)" (SHK 1996: 1).

3.2 Development of the offer

Let us start by looking at the development of the number of courses since the inception of the impulse program (graph 1).

With a little bit of good will, it is possible to distinguish the three stages that the practitioners of the area would have suspected intuitively: a launching stage roughly 1990-1993, a phase of stabilisation 1993-1996, and a finishing phase 1996-1998. Unfortunately, we have no overall figures about the development of non-subsidised courses during the same period; we shall see such figures later for the case of Lausanne.

Graph 1: Number of subsidised courses of continuing education beginning in the years 1990-1998, by university



Universities: Zurich (ZH), Bern (BE), Fribourg (FR), Basle (BS), St. Gallen (SG), Lausanne (LS), Neuchâtel (NE), Geneva (GE).

We can see that in the *first stage* the train rapidly speeds up, with those universities having a better institutional preparation - Bern and Geneva - joining in earlier than the others. However, the latter catch up quickly, at the exception of St. Gall. We can also see that the smallest and least well equipped universities with respect to continuing education, i.e. Neuchâtel and Fribourg, reach and afterwards maintain a level that is lower than for the other universities. Institutional factors, among which the sheer size of the university, seem to play an important role for the capacity to become an actor in the game initiated by the Confederation. The specific structure of the centres seems to be of lesser importance if one considers the similarities between the curves of Zurich with its very decentralised structure and those of Geneva, Basle and Lausanne which have clearly more centralised services.

During the *second stage* the number of subsidised courses evolves variably but generally on a rather high level - with the differences related to university size already mentioned - and with a slowly decreasing tendency that is most probably already related to the beginning transition to non-subsidised courses.

The radical decrease in the *third stage*, after 1996, reflects the anticipated running out of the impulse programme; it is without doubt more than compensated by the simultaneous development of non-subsidised courses in all universities.

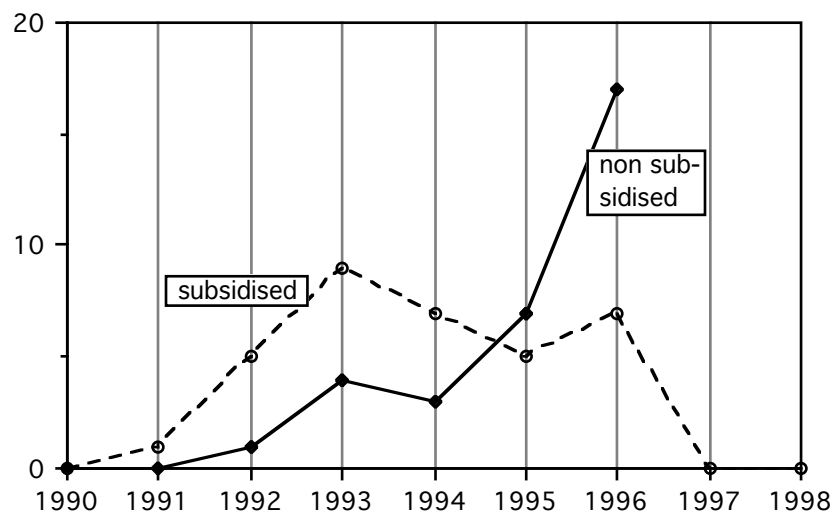
This is, of course, no profound analysis with a systematic validation of interpretations. Nevertheless, on the grounds of all formal and informal information I have,

they seem to me at least sufficient to justify the rather optimistic conclusions I have quoted from the commission's final report.

3.3 Case study of the social composition of participants: Lausanne

Since the national figures have not yet been assembled, it may be interesting to study the social composition of these courses' audience in the single case of Lausanne which is probably not especially atypical. The University of Lausanne did not have any prior inter-faculty co-ordination of activities in the area of continuing education. These were left to the initiative of individual faculties or professors and developed especially in Medicine, Economics and to a smaller extent also in Law. The service of continuing education was created ex nihilo with the help of the federal subsidies, which is all the more remarkable as this university, contrary to Geneva, lacks studies in pedagogy, especially in adult education. From 1991 to 1995, 37 courses with a total of 1234 participants have been realised in the new framework.

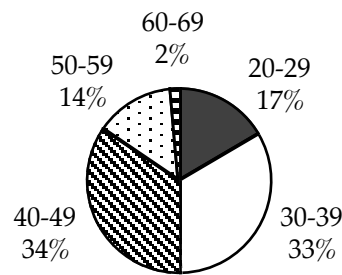
Graph 2: *Development of the number of subsidised and non-subsidised courses at the University of Lausanne, 1990-2000*



According to graph 1 it has been possible to reach a volume of subsidised courses that corresponds roughly to the university's size, which indicates that the objective to reinforce activity in the realm of continuing education has been attained to a reasonable extent. Graph 2 shows that it has also been possible to create the hoped-for spill-over effect towards self-financed courses. Continuing education has been introduced in heretofore less active disciplines - practically all faculties have participated - and also succeeded to reach an audience that had little or no prior contact with the university.³

³ Graphs 3 to 7 concern only the subsidised courses.

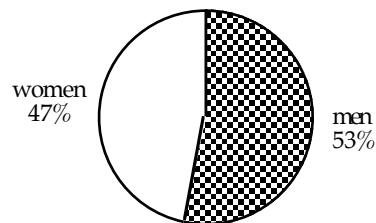
Graph 3: Age of participants, University of Lausanne 1991-1995



Graph 3 makes it plain that the new offer has attracted mainly the career-intensive age groups between 30 and 50, which may be related, among others, to the fact that the younger people have left their initial education not very long before; according to the microcensus, this age structure holds also for continuing education in general.

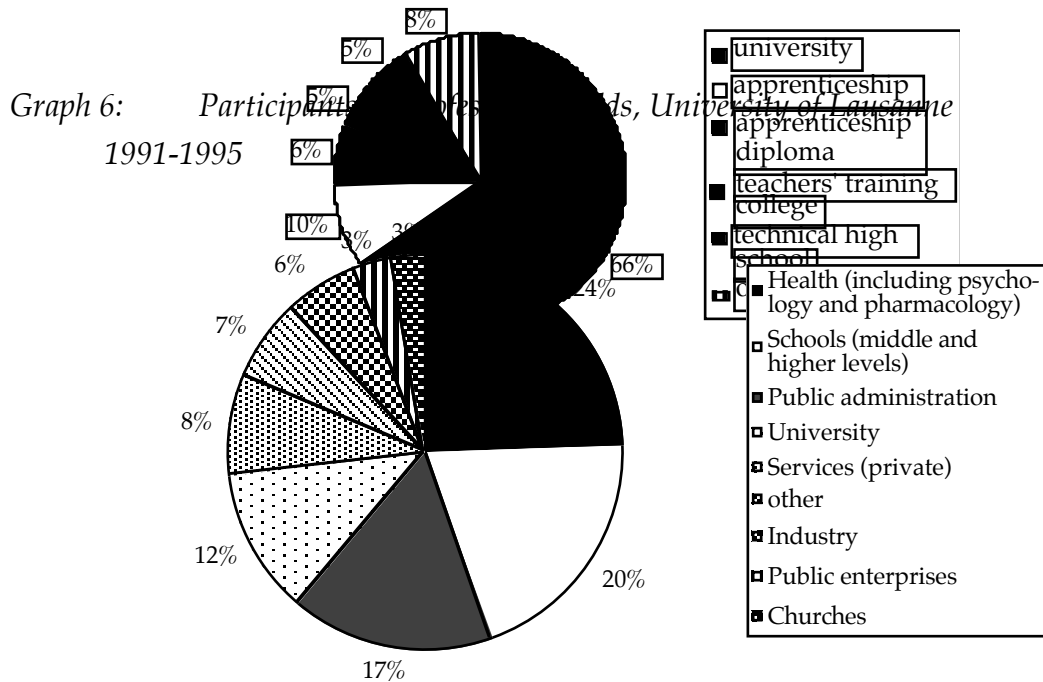
According to Graph 4, there are almost as many men as women among the participants, which means that *women's participation*, at least in the working area of this university, has been more intensive than men's, since women's labour force participation is clearly lower than men's, including in those higher professional situations to which participants of university lifelong learning mainly belong.

Graph 4: Participants by gender, University of Lausanne 1991-1995



One of the main objectives of the federal impulse program was to open the universities beyond university graduates. Graph 5 shows that this has been the case to quite some extent at Lausanne as one third of the participants has *no academic degree* (total population: about 12%). The second largest group's initial education has not gone farther than to the apprenticeship diploma.

Graph 5: Participants' level of initial education, University of Lausanne 1991-1995

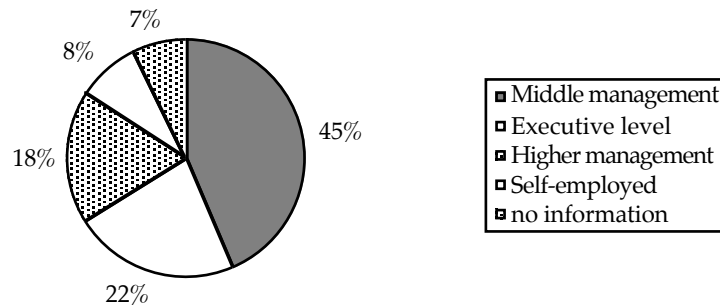


The *professional fields* from which participants have been recruited are fairly widespread (Graph 6), again in accordance with the program's aims. However, we have to note a large proportion of the various categories of participants from the public sector (health, education, public administration and enterprises) with respect to their proportion in the work force; this finding corresponds again to other results.

We can speculate about this fact being related to a general sympathy for continuing education in the public sector that is supposed to be higher than in the private sector, or rather to the two sectors' different composition, implying that the public sector comprises a higher proportion of those professions and positions that are anyway interested in this possibility to renew knowledge. Probably, both effects combine: on the one hand, state functions are more directly related to professional profiles that are strongly based on knowledge and expertise (Fluder 1996: 92), on the other hand, state agencies invest more in long-term strategies of human capital formation than private firms. Another factor that may intervene is again structural: firm size. The Swiss economy has a very strong component of small firms, whereas state agencies have more often the scope of middle or large organisations.⁴

⁴ In the survey that will be used in the following section, the proportion of the professionally active in firms of 25 or more is 36.6% in the private sector, 48.8% in the public sector.

Graph 7: Participants' professional position, University of Lausanne 1991-1995



Concerning *hierarchical position*, graph 7 shows a relationship between continuing education and hierarchy that we shall take up again in the next section: almost half of the participants belong to the middle management, almost a fifth to the higher management, i.e. almost two thirds come from higher positions. Of course, this fact alone would not be very astonishing speaking of academic continuing education. However, we shall find the same relationship for other levels of continuing education; therefore, it can not only be explained by the level of the offer.

On the whole it is safe to say that at least in the case of Lausanne, the federal impulse program has helped realise an offer of continuing education that corresponds rather well to the objective to make university knowledge available to a large array of participants who are not exclusively former university graduates.

3.4 The use of the existing offer of continuing education

Let us now have a closer look at the question of who uses continuing education. The available data stem principally from a microcensus of the Federal office of statistics in 1993 (BFS 1995, Rychen & Schmid 1994, Rychen 1995). Unfortunately, the published results do not say a lot about academic continuing education; we shall have to enlarge our interest to the whole field of lifelong learning, both in the sense of encompassing all levels and of all kinds of orientation.⁵ Another source of information is a survey on social stratification conducted in 1991 with a nation-wide sample of 2030 people (Levy et al. 1997); this survey concerns also all of lifelong learning and does not single out its academic part, but it allows for finer-grained analyses of its use according to a great number of social criteria.

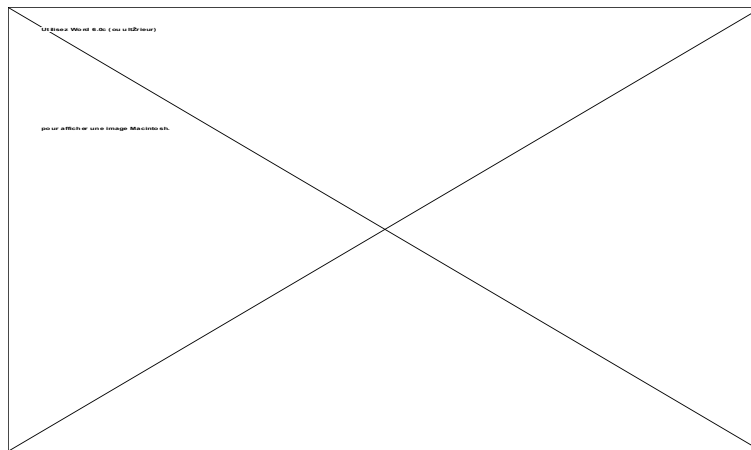
3.4.1 Continuing education among university graduates

⁵ Whereas academic continuing education as dispensed by the universities (unlike the one offered by public and private « Volkshochschulen » or other institutions) is mainly profession oriented.

Results about lifelong learning practices among university graduates - who are the main target group of academic continuing education despite more generous objectives - show that only a fifth of the courses they take are specifically geared to academics. Moreover, they recur less often to such courses than graduates from non-university tertiary schools. Part of this difference is certainly explained by the larger definition of its audience by most of academic continuing education. But it may also have to do with university graduates having specific non-academic needs for complementary education.⁶ These explanations notwithstanding, it seems likely that the low proportion of university courses among those taken by university graduates also indicates that the universities are still far from having explored all their market potential. The part of courses offered by public agencies (18% in the general public, 22% among academics) is relatively modest, the part of those offered by universities even more modest (11% among academics).

Another important finding concerns the reasons given for *not* taking courses of continuing education. Adults with tertiary education mention much more frequently than others autonomous forms of continuing education such as reading, going to congresses, listening to conferences and the like; instead of going to courses, they organise their lifelong learning on their own. This fact may explain an intriguing statistical peculiarity shown by graph 8.

Graph 8: Ratio of participation in continuing education by level of initial education (survey 1991, N=1976)



A closer look at the relationship between participation in courses of continuing education and the initial educational level shows that there is a general, quite clear-cut positive correlation (we shall come back to it later), but that the very university graduates deviate from the statistical association (graph 8). Not only is their ratio of formal lifelong learning not higher than the one of people with non-academic tertiary education, it is even lower. The reasons that university graduates advance more

⁶ Findings from periodical surveys of university graduates corroborate this interpretation (Diem 1994).

often than others for not going to such courses indicate quite clearly that absence from these courses must not be identified with not practising lifelong learning at all. Their autonomous activities in this field probably explain to a large extent the academics' deviation concerning institutionalised lifelong learning as shown by graph 8.

One practical conclusion from these results could be that in the future, academic continuing education should address itself more to non-academics and especially to target group with less than a tertiary education because among these groups autonomous forms of lifelong learning are less frequent and the university label may have more appeal to them. Another, more interesting conclusion would be to improve the pedagogical format of the courses offered to university graduates on the basis of these results and to integrate better their habits of autonomous forms of learning.

3.4.2 Lifelong learning in general

The basic result about the social use of continuing education is without doubt the main tendency in graph 8 we have already seen: *the higher the level of initial education, the more continuing education is practised*. This finding is confirmed by others stemming from my study on social stratification. The distinction of interviewees by their socioprofessional categories yields similar, but more differentiated results. The highest participation rate obtains among members of the high management (75.0%). Apart from these, the highest rates are found in the middle professional categories (64%), the lowest ones among both the lowest *and* the best-located categories (liberal professions 41%, unskilled 22%). If one considers the professional position and the initial level of education simultaneously, it appears that the participation rates among the overqualified tend to be higher than among the underqualified. *Thus, the more modest initial education is compared to the professional position, the less frequent is lifelong learning.*

This is a strong hint at lifelong learning being used specifically by the "new middle classes" that are often difficult to identify empirically. These social categories occupy intermediate professional positions with profiles implying little decisional competence but important expert functions, which accounts for the most crucial qualification being the ability to use various kinds of knowledge and for a strong motivation to maintain and develop this knowledge.

Still other results add credibility to this interpretation. We found a strong differential according to *hierarchical position* between persons with executive functions (in the French sense of the absence of supervisory activities - 39% participants in lifelong learning activities) and those with middle and higher management positions (70%

and 68%, respectively). Lifelong learning is more often used by employees in *public* than in private enterprises - it has already been said that expert functions in a large sense are more important in the public sector than in the private one - and also more often in the more *dynamic sectors* of the industry and the services.⁷ Distinguishing finally (with Kohn & Schooler 1983) according to the *nature of work*, we find analogous, but more differentiated differences between persons with mainly manual work (people who mainly manipulate objects - 30%), mainly relational work (people who accompany, nurse, counsel, discuss, teach, supervise, inform) or work with a mixed profile (55%), and those who mainly work with symbols (i.e. who plan, write, calculate, analyse, draw, etc. - 66%).

This confirms the impression that lifelong learning finds its best clients among the so-called knowledge-workers for whom knowledge, analytical and reflective capacity are the most important professional tools - and maybe also their most important foundations of identity.

All this indicates that education and its maintenance by lifelong learning has the meaning of a specific form of capital, the enlargement of which during adult life - much like the constitution of its initial volume during initial education - follows a logic of accumulation and rewards and not so much a logic of compensation or of the equilibration of incoherent positions. This reminds one of a result of the microcensus about motivations to participate; among these, "adaptation to changing conditions" is clearly more important than "upward mobility" or other reasons. In the area that interests us, forces of status maintenance play a more important role than forces of compensatory mobility. Thus, compared to other criteria of social status, education has a more pronounced component of power than its seeming institutional openness and accessibility makes usually believe.⁸

This is tantamount to showing (at least for Switzerland) that - contrary to its constitutive values - lifelong learning is in fact firmly anchored in the classical mechanisms of inequality and its reproduction in modern society, especially in the economy. It turns out to be a first rate resource of social positioning; its accessibility is controlled accordingly, especially by way of privileges conferred to high-placed collaborators by their employers (as shown by the microcensus).⁹

⁷ On a more precise level this means that lifelong learning is especially little asked for in such sectors as textile, wood and furniture, paper, synthetics, leather, shoes, stones and earth, but also in hotels and restaurants, whereas it especially appreciated in the branches of graphics, metal, banks, insurances, education, culture and leisure.

⁸ This interpretation is further confirmed by our findings about social mobility. In Switzerland, attainment of professional positions is as strongly determined by prior education as in Germany and clearly more so than in Anglosaxon or Scandinavian countries (Levy et al. 1996).

⁹ Cfr. the results of the microcensus concerning the hierarchical and gender differences of the encouragement by the employer (BFS 1995, Rychen 1995).

This fact has its most immediate practical consequence for the question of the extent to which access to lifelong learning should be regulated by the market mechanism. It follows that the universities' function as producers of public goods (and not purely as profit centres, the services of which benefit entirely their individual clients) in the realm of continuing education can only be secured by measures that financially empower those potential clients who have a low purchasing power and by the integration of fund-raising as a regular task into the professional repertoire of centres of continuing education.

4. Transitional stage

Lifelong learning at the universities in Switzerland is actually in the transition stage between the finishing regime of subsidised courses and the upswing of the regime of self-financed courses. Most likely, the situation of the various lifelong learning centres in the universities will become more diverse and lose its actual transparency - as we have seen, we already know very little about the development of the non-subsidised courses. This opaqueness may be typical of such stages, but efforts are needed to secure a minimum of documentation of course development in Switzerland on the basis of a common grid.

It may also be typical of such a situation that the attempt to evaluate it tends to yield the trivial image of the half full and half empty glass. I shall of course not allow myself to filter out the problems by opting for the pink-only vision, and rather consider both the elements belonging to the « full half » and those belonging to the other; however, the panorama will by no means be complete.

I treat the *full* part rather briefly. Among its elements, there is a) the positive development of self-financed courses in all universities, b) the solid collaboration of practically all university centres of lifelong learning, since despite the potential competition between them, their directors have a clear vision of their common interests and the fact that these can only be defended by common action (e.g., the elaboration of a common quality code, common marketing for the academic label, more practical forms of collaboration in the area of course information, etc.). Another positive element is c) the better institutional integration at the universities as compared to the launching phase, be it in the field of presidential policies or in the field of legal bases.

However, the latter subject also belongs to the *empty* half, for a) at most of the universities and despite real progress, institutional consolidation of lifelong learning has still a substantial way to go. I shall come back to this. An additional difficulty comes from b) the actual financial situation that becomes dramatical for several universities

in the very moment of the necessary take-over of lifelong learning into their ordinary budgets. As already mentioned, the university cantons have never explicitly accepted an engagement to do so, and in the present situation, they seem very unequally prepared to it. The university authorities' temptation is great to extend the principle of self-financing not only to the courses, but to the services as well. This would be the final step towards the function as a profit centre. In this case, the university would have to renounce to its function as a public service in this field and the society as a whole would clearly not exploit the entire potential universities hold. Still another difficulty is c) the blocked possibility to participate in the educational programs of the European Union.

I think that even in the face of great local differences most of these difficulties can be overcome, provided a minimum of financial and strategic autonomy remains granted. This brings me to the last section:

5. Perspectives and strategies

Many practitioners of continuing education in Switzerland have spent a fair part of the last years at working out and realising strategies and measures to develop and consolidate lifelong learning at the universities. Thus, what I can present here reflects more or less directly the present state of thinking in this field and may not be particularly original. I shall limit myself to spot those aspects that seem to me most important in the next years and shall group them in two categories: first, the realisation of good courses for lifelong learning, second, the institutional consolidation of continuing university education.

5.1 High quality offer

The most important element in any development strategy is evidently the production of good courses that satisfy the participants. What "good" means should not be restricted - especially at the university level - to the pragmatic criterion of the effective demand (following the slogan "'Good' is what people are willing to pay"), but it should be based on criteria of formal and substantive quality. As mentioned before, one policy in this field in Switzerland consists to work out a common quality code of the university services of continuing education.

The quality of university lifelong learning must also become publicly known. In that respect, the main line should not be usual publicity, but rather other, well-targeted forms of PR and information. In this perspective, it has been helpful that the services

in Switzerland were able, with the help of the Confederation, to participate collectively in two educational fairs. Here also it is important, after the end of the impulse program, not to fall back on purely local strategies, but to find an equilibrium between a necessary heightening of the profiles of the individual services with their respective strengths and areas of competence, and the common engagement for the "label" of academic continuing education. In the area of information, a good precondition has been realised in the form of a nation-wide, publicly accessible data base on the actual offer of courses that is presently being transferred to internet.¹⁰ Increased integration of various techniques of distance learning may also be helpful to reduce practical barriers, although the problem of the isolation of the individual, atomised learners, that may well neutralise the advantages of their active engagement (especially in the case of adults who "come back" to learning after years of professional activity), is not always clearly tackled.

Another new instrument in the professional tool-kit of practitioners has not yet been sufficiently developed and put to use: fund-raising. I am convinced that finding external financial resources must become an integral part of their professional identity and knowledge.

5.2 Institutional consolidation

To reinforce institutionalisation is a second strategic orientation that is to my view at least as important as the first one. However, it is more slow to take shape and the practitioners in the services of continuing education have an understandable tendency to neglect it, as their primary preoccupation is the production of courses.

A first and crucial component of this line of action is the maintenance of the exchange of *information* between all the partners, especially the ones who represent potential participants, but also all those who influence some part of the relevant environment. Even if external policy is usually seen to be a privileged task or even as a monopoly of the steering boards of the universities, it seems clear to me that political lobbying and contacts with the media in favour of university continuing education must not be left to rectors and presidents, and that the practitioners should not restrict themselves to making suggestions to them. They have to engage into this activity on their own, be it on the local, regional (cantonal) or national level. Here is another field of possible and necessary co-operation between services. Part of it can be realised on the level of an already existing working group uniting the directors of the university services, another part calls for the intervention of an official commission

¹⁰ Location: http://agora.ethz.ch/welcome_f.html.

for strategic questions that has the necessary status to interact with relevant public actors.

A large number of more concrete and local measures of *institutionalisation* has been discussed since several years:

- ▣ official acknowledgement of continuing education as a major task of universities, of equal importance as their more conventional ones;
- ▣ integration of this activity into the job descriptions and time-budgets of university teachers;
- ▣ consolidation of a critical mass of manpower and soft money for continuing education in the ordinary budgets;
- ▣ effective integration of the services in all relevant procedures in the universities (e.g., external presentation, access to equipment, decision-making, internal flows of information etc.); in this area, that should go by itself once a university has made the decision to really engage in continuing education, there still exists an important need for action, with substantial differences between universities.

Other important strategic objectives have remained pending. I think above all of the two related questions of *certification* and of the establishment of a permeable *credit system* based on the European model. This again is an area where purely local strategies can quickly become counterproductive for all parts.

Not yet last, and not at all least, I should like to mention a *ceterum censeo* of mine. It is of crucial importance to realise in a near future measures that are apt to *give equal purchasing power to all potential participants in lifelong learning*, be it by help of subsidised and protected educational leaves, of fellowships, educational credits or vouchers with favourable conditions of reimbursement, of fiscal incentives for both firms that encourage lifelong learning of their personnel and for people who pay for themselves. To care about such questions does not belong to the usual self-image of producers of continuing education, but in the present political and institutional constellation they are the only actors who have a legitimate say on such initiatives.

Contrary declarations notwithstanding, it seems to me that in Swiss university policies initial education is still largely predominant, not only with respect to the acquired volume of resources, but also concerning planned-for developments. Let me cite only one illustration of the fact that continuing education practitioners need to be anything but modest in the present situation. Even if, after the end of the impulse program, i.e., in 2000, the canton of Waadt would add the total amount of the subsidies to its university budget (which is less than certain), this amount would repre-

sent no more than a fifth of a percent of that budget; not really a generous resource allocation for one of the four main goals in the university's official mission.

Concerning changes, it seems no less evident that much more thinking and resources go to initial education. One last example: The board of co-ordination between the French speaking universities, called Conférence des universités de Suisse occidentale (CUSO), has recently established an official label and also some financial means for post-graduate studies; analogous requests concerning continuing education have not yet been answered and even less been planned for. This calls for a last question: should we not aim at uniting, at the universities, continuing and post-graduate education in one single organisational unit, as is already the case in the two technical universities (under the heading of "post-education")? This could be an efficient structural measure to prevent energy-consuming conflicts for resources and to secure the effective realisation of synergy, for instance in the form of common modules.

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