National unity in cultural diversity: How national and linguistic identities affected Swiss language curricula (1914–1961)

Anja Giudici[a] & Sandra Grizelj[b]

[a]*Institute of Education, University of Zurich, Switzerland;* [b]*School of Education, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland, Switzerland*

Anja Giudici, University of Zurich, Freiestrasse 36, CH-8032 Zurich, anja.giudici@ife.uzh.ch - Sandra Grizelj, University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland (FHNW), Benzburweg 30, CH-4410 Liestal, sandra.grizelj@fhnw.ch

Anja Giudici is a research associate at the Institute of Education at the University of Zurich, Switzerland. Her research interests include education policy and history, democratic theory and language policy and theory. She is currently working toward her PhD in language education in Switzerland from 1830 to 1980.

Sandra Grizelj is a research associate at the School of Education at the University of Applied Sciences and Arts Northwestern Switzerland. In her research she focuses on the history of education and on discourses on education in Switzerland. In her PhD dissertation she investigates the teaching of French as a foreign language in the German-speaking part of Switzerland from 1830 to 2000.

National unity in cultural diversity: How national and linguistic identity affected Swiss language curricula (1914–1961)

From the end of the eighteenth century onwards, the relationship between the state, language, and schooling had become extremely close: A state was supposed to be 'national', and a real nation was supposed to be monolingual. Following the literature on nation-building, because schooling was charged with the task of forming such nations, the curricula for the schools that were intended for the great majority of pupils included only one language. Although the theory of a direct effect of national identity on curricula was elaborated by focusing on the typical monolingual nation-states, this paper discusses the effect from the perspective of a multilingual state: Switzerland.

Our analysis shows that in the 1914–1945 period the Swiss state's multilingualism became part of the Swiss national identity and learning another national language became a matter of patriotic education. However, this new conception did not affect all curricula in the same manner. The economic and pedagogical rationales given voice to by actors other than the state seem to be equally important factors in explaining the decisions made regarding language curricula as a state's national identity.

Therefore, we warn against the assumption that is implicit in many studies on nation-building that a school's language policy automatically aligns with a state's national identity and we argue for more empirical work that discusses the actual nexus between these two institutions.

Keywords: Curriculum studies; multilingualism; Switzerland; nation-building; language policy

Introduction

The accounts of why language became such an important part of the concept of the 'nation-state' differ. [1] However, despite all the explanations on how this became a fact, [2] scholars of nationalism are unanimous in their conclusion: From the end of the 18th century onwards, the relationship between the nation, state, and language had become increasingly "intimate", almost symbiotic: "Whoever says 'language' has already tacitly thought 'state'". [3] A state was supposed to be 'national', and a real nation was supposed to be monolingual. This strong connection has been said to result in and from a number of policies, advanced by political, intellectual, and pedagogical elites to align linguistic boundaries with state borders. Along with the military and the mass media, the

---

[1] The terms nation, state, and nation-state are often used as synonyms. However, in this article, we distinguish between the concept of the 'state' – as the political entity that governs a particular territory – and that of the 'nation' – the population sharing a particular territory and feeling bound by a selection of common features (history, language, public culture, etc.). We call the sum of these common features 'national identity', whereas the part regarding languages and their role in national identities we refer to as 'linguistic identity'. Although a state and a nation can overlap, thus forming a nation-state, they do not have to.

[2] Although some authors such as Hobsbawm note the importance of a common language in states gradually transforming into mass democracies, others such as Greenfeld and Schmidt depict language homogenisation as an effective method of fostering the bonds among supposed 'co-nationals'. However another strand of the literature represented by Gellner and Haugen calls attention to the socio-economic side of the story: Disposing over a common language is supposed to be functional to modern states' mobile society and industrialised economy. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism. Five Roads to Modernity* (Harvard: HUP, 1992); Einar Haugen, "The curse of Babel," *Deadalus* 102, no. 3 (1973): 47–57. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990); Ronald Schmidt, "Political theory and language policy," in *Introduction to Language Policy*, ed. Thomas Ricento (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 95–110.

[3] Abram de Swaan, *Words of the World* (Cambridge: Polity, 2001), 149.

institution that the literature notes as the most important in disseminating this understanding of language and of monolingual national identities themselves, is public schooling.[4] The latter seems to be one of the most important means for, to borrow Eugen Weber's renowned phrase, transforming peasants – and all other social classes – into Frenchmen,[5] respectively into Englishmen, Germans, or Swiss.

Hence, at least until the 1950s, almost all primary schools' curricula, those meant to form the large majority of the nation-states' population, included only one language, the so-called 'national language'.[6] Not only were the other languages spoken by the pupils – classified as 'dialects' or 'foreign' languages – excluded from curricula but schooling was also often intended to eradicate what was supposed to symbolise 'foreign' cultures and to act as a centrifugal force.[7]

In the literature we have referred to up to this point, curricula are supposed to be a pedagogical representation of a state's linguistic national identity. This also holds for cases often regarded as 'outliers' with respect to language's role in nation-building. In 1843, the Luxemburgish authorities included both German and French in the country's curricula, a measure that has been interpreted as "one of the first important acts of

---

[4] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1983); Haugen, "The curse of Babel"; Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*.

[5] Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1976).

[6] Yun-Kyung Cha, "Effects of the global system on language instruction, 1850–1986," *Sociology of Education* 64, no. 1 (1991): 19–32.

[7] Stephen May, "Language policy and minority rights," in *An Introduction to Language Policy*, ed. Thomas Ricento (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 255–72; de Swaan, *Words of the World.*

nation-building".[8] Belgium, however, first planned to socialise its elite into a unified 'national' French-speaking community. Therefore, the literature argues, it allowed the teaching of Dutch in northern primary schools, but the rest of the educational offer was held exclusively in French.[9]

As shown by studies on curricula and their legitimations, nation-building was not language curricula's only aim.[10] Nonetheless, especially in times perceived as crises, teaching all children a common language was legitimated due to its efficacy in creating a common culture and keeping a nation-state united.[11] What during the nineteenth century became 'foreign' languages were only included in secondary schools' curricula, those intended for pupils with a future in commerce, administration,

[8] Jean-Jacques Weber and Christine Horner, "The trilingual Luxembourgish school system in historical perspective: progress or regress?," *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 25, no. 1 (2012), 3–15.

[9] Frank Delmartin, "Belgien: Bildungspolitik auf regionaler Ebene und im europäischen Kontext," *Bildungspolitik in Föderalstaaten und der Europäischen Union: Does Federalism Matter?*, ed. Rudolf Hrbek, Martin Große Hüttmann and Josef Schmid (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2012), 95–103.

[10] Studies on mother-tongue education in England, Germany, and Italy have shown the multiple aims of this subject, which was viewed as the binding element of curricula and as the prerequisite for thinking and learning *tout court.* Instruction in pupils' (supposed) mother tongue should foster moral or aesthetic education as well as discipline. See: e.g. Paolo E. Balboni, *Storia dell'educazione linguistica in Italia* (Novara: UTET Università, 2009); Horst J. Frank, *Geschichte des Deutschunterrichts* (München: Carl Hanser, 1973); Ingrid Gogolin, *Der monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule* (Münster: Waxmann, 1994); Stephen J. Ball, Alex Kenny and David Gardiner, "Literacy, Politics and the teaching of English," in *Bringing English to Order: The Story and Politics of a School Subject*, ed. Ivor Goodson and Peter Medway (London: Falmer Press, 1990), 47–86.

[11] Roshan Doug, "The British schools' National Curriculum: English and the politics of teaching poetry from different cultures and traditions," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 43, no. 4 (2011): 439–56.

or academia. The selection of languages was strongly influenced by a state's position in commercial and political international relations.[12]

In brief, the studies that we noted above all assume or postulate a direct effect of a state's national identity on its language curricula – which we define as the ensemble of norms regulating which languages must be taught to which pupils, for what purposes, and with which methods and contents. In this paper, we use our analysis of Swiss language curricula reforms between 1914 and 1961 to question this assumption. The case is of particular interest given that, in this period, Switzerland's national identity changed: multilingualism became an integral part of it. Thus, we can ask whether Swiss language curricula were reformed accordingly. Our analysis shows that the change in Switzerland's national identity had a differential impact on the country's language curricula – sometimes it did not affect them at all. It follows that the influence of national identity on language curricula – and most likely on curricula in more general terms – cannot be taken for granted but must be empirically investigated.

The following section outlines our framework of analysis, discussing our case selection as well as our sources and methodological approach. The third section describes how Switzerland's linguistic identity changed from 1914 to 1945, and in the fourth section we ask whether these changes were followed by corresponding reforms of the language curricula until 1961. Our results are discussed in the conclusion at the end of the article.

---

[12] Balboni, *Storia dell'educazione lingustica in Italia*; Jérémie Dubois, *L'enseignement de l'Italien en France* (Grenoble: Elug, 2015); Gogolin, *Der monolinguale Habitus der multilingualen Schule*; Björg B. Gundem, "Foreign language teaching as an instrument of policy in the cultural and societal orientation of a nation," in *Bringing English to Order,* ed. Ivor Goodson and Peter Medway (London: Falmer Press, 1990), 185–96.

Framework of analysis

Recent work in the history of education and comparative education has criticised studies in their respective fields for generally assuming that the state, informed by nationalist principles, is the most powerful actor in shaping public education. Research, this work argues, should place the nexus between the (nation-)state and curricula under empirical scrutiny, not succumb to "methodological nationalism" or "methodological statism"[13] and not automatically depart from the idea of "a powerful state from which schools somehow cascaded down towards a people who embraced them with fervour".[14] In fact, various empirical studies have made a strong case for understanding schooling, and particularly curricula, as the result of conflictive negotiations occurring at multiple levels of the education polity and involving actors with different interests and values rather than as the reflection of the nationalising intentions of a unitary actor called the state.[15] Nonetheless, the scholarship in the field is still informed by the assumption that (language) curricula always follow from a state's dominant national identity; in what is supposed to become the new seminal reader of Swiss history, historian G. Kreis states that, *because* Switzerland was conceived as a multilingual state, in the 1830s, a second national language was included in Swiss curricula.[16]

---

[13] Roger Dale and Susan Robertson, "Beyond methodological 'isms' in comparative education in an era of globalisation," in *International Handbook in Comparative Education,* ed. Robert Cowen and Andreas M. Kazamias (Berlin: Springer, 2009), 1113–1127.

[14] Elsie Rockwell and Eugenia Roldán Vera, "State governance and civil society in education," *Paedagogica Historica* 49, no. 1: 1–16.

[15] For language curricula see especially: Stephen L. Harp, *Learning to be Loyal. Primary Schooling as Nation-Building in Alsace and Lorraine, 1850–1940* (Dekalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1998).

[16] Georg Kreis, "Mehrere Sprachen – eine Gesellschaft," in *Die Geschichte der Schweiz,* ed. Georg Kreis (Basel: Schwabe, 2014), 486–9.

Actually, a second national language was not included in all Swiss curricula. And this is exactly why Switzerland is a pathway case for discussing the nexus between national identity and language curricula. As with about all other European countries, in the 1830s, almost all cantons' authorities[17] – which were charged with education policy in federalist Switzerland – decided to restrict foreign language teaching to non-compulsory secondary schools and academic school-types. The subject was judged to be too expansive and unnecessary for compulsory primary schools, especially given that most of the pupils enrolled there would never need it for their professional future.[18] Exceptions can be found in the cities and zones where the economic benefits of teaching a second language seemed to outweigh the subject's costs; cities with strong national and international trade relations (e.g., Basel, Schaffhausen, and Geneva) included foreign languages in curricula of all types of schools. The same occurred for the tiny fraction of Rumansh-speakers in the canton of Graubünden and the rural regions strongly dependent on emigration. In the latter, communes were sometimes allowed to introduce a second language (elective for pupils) in upper primary schools or in so-called "advanced" primary schools.

The fact that the inclusion or exclusion of languages from curricula merely followed from an economic rationale was not at odds with the ideas that informed the debate on Swiss national identity at the time. These debates hinged on the role of

[17] Until 1979 Switzerland was composed of 21 monolingual cantons (17 German, 3 French, and 1 Italian), 3 bilingual cantons (German and French) and 1 trilingual canton (German, Italian and Rumansh). Since 1979 and the foundation of the French-speaking canton of Jura, there have been 22 monolingual cantons.

[18] Anja Giudici, "Una scuola per la democrazia? Relazioni fra politica linguistica scolastica, Stato e identità nazionale multilingue nel caso svizzero," *Annali di storia dell'educazione e delle istituzioni scolastiche* 23 (2016): 106–23.

history and geography; [19] languages did not play a relevant role. Even the official recognition of Switzerland's three "major languages" in its first federal constitution in 1848 – German, French and Italian (Art. 109 of the Federal Constitution 1848) [20] – was not informed by ideas about the country's national identity. Analyses of the constitutional debates have shown that this measure was meant to solve an administrative concern; by recognising three languages the federal state and not the cantons was charged with the translation costs of the communication between these two levels of the Swiss polity.[21]

However, in the period that followed, linguistic nationalism – the principle that language and state borders should coincide – became stronger, endangering multilingual Switzerland's legitimacy as an independent state. This incongruence with what was becoming a shared international norm forced the Swiss elite to redefine the country's national identity[22] and culminated in an overt crisis with the outbreak of the First World War.[23] The divisions surrounding Switzerland's linguistic identity were overcome by

---

[19] For a detailed account of these debates, see: Oliver Zimmer, *A Contested Nation: History, Memory and Nationalism in Switzerland, 1761–1891* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[20] Despite the quantitative difference in the linguistic groups (in 1850, the Swiss population was composed of 71.4% German speakers, 23.1% French speakers and 5.5% Italian speakers), the languages are defined as equal in the Swiss constitution. See: Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern, *Uebersichten der Bevölkerung der Schweiz nach den Ergebnissen der letzten eidgenössischen Volkszählung* (Bern: Stämpfli, 1851).

[21] Eric Godel and Dunya Acklin Muji, "Nationales Selbstverständnis und Sprache in der Bundesverfassung von 1848," in *Die Schweizer Sprachenvielfalt im öffentlichen Diskurs*, ed. Jean Widmer et al. (Bern: Lang, 2004), 31–126.

[22] Oliver Zimmer, *A Contested Nation*.

[23] Lucien Criblez, *Zwischen Pädagogik und Politik: Bildung und Erziehung in der deutschsprachigen Schweiz zwischen Krise und Krieg* (Bern: Lang, 1995); Konrad J. Kuhn and Béatrice Ziegler, *Der vergessene Krieg. Spuren und Traditionen zur Schweiz im*

the outbreak of the Second World War, when the political and intellectual elite agreed in declaring Switzerland a "multilingual nation" and the knowledge of multiple languages became one of the characteristics that should be involved in making Swiss citizen.

This period of Swiss history thus offers an ideal basis for analysing whether and how national identities affect language curricula. Regarding why, first, it is marked by a change in the country's linguistic national identity. If language curricula are directly informed by national identities, then Switzerland's newly conceived linguistic identity should have affected curricular reforms in the subsequent period. We discuss this hypothesis, examining the curricular reforms and reform attempts until 1961. We end our analysis in 1961 because, in this year, the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education stated its commitment to fostering foreign language education in compulsory types of schools, marking a new phase in European language policy.[24] The curricular reforms made after this date – in Switzerland as well – have been informed by these new international policy principles.

Second, Switzerland's federalism creates a unique analytical basis for studying the link between a state's linguistic identity and language curricula. We have at our disposal 25 (today 26) political entities that are formally autonomous in formulating their education policy, while still being placed under the same national, constitutional and political frame. Formal or informal changes in the conformation of the Swiss state

---

Ersten Weltkrieg (Baden: hier + jetzt, 2014); Andreas Ernst and Erich Wigger, ed., *Die neue Schweiz? Eine Gesellschaft zwischen Integration und Polarisierung* (Zurich: Chronos, 1996).

[24] Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, "2nd session 10–15 April 1961. Resolution on the expansion and improvement of modern language teaching (No. 6)," www.coe.int (accessed June 7, 2016).

and what is viewed as its identity affect them all together. Methodologically, these circumstances allow for horizontal comparisons between the sub-state entities and analyses of their vertical relations with the central state. The combination of both enables us to reach differentiated conclusions about the reasons behind their differential responses to a common incentive.[25]

Our analysis relies on: *a)* the formal documents regulating language teaching in Switzerland and the Swiss cantons (e.g., curricula, school laws, etc.); *b)* the sources documenting the public debate on language curricula – e.g., statements and publications of teacher associations, politicians, intellectuals, and educationalists; and *c)* the documentation on t the relevant political and administrative procedures. Using these sources we focus on the foreign language curricula of compulsive primary and non-academic secondary schools. These are the types of school meant to form the majority of the country's future citizens: If a particular subject or content must reach everyone, then it must be included there.

Because it encompasses not only languages such as English and Latin but also Swiss languages such as French, German, and Italian, the term 'foreign language' may seem strange with regards to Switzerland's linguistic situation. Nonetheless, all these subjects are called 'foreign languages' in most of the sources we used. To avoid misunderstandings, we use the term 'foreign languages' to indicate all languages included in curricula apart from the language of schooling, whereas we use 'national languages as second languages' (in short, 'second national language') for teaching of German, French, or Italian in another language region. However, one must bear in mind that, in the period we are analysing, the only languages discussed for inclusion or

---

[25] Richard Snyder, "Scaling down: The subnational comparative method," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 36, no. 1 (2001): 93–110.

exclusion in non-academic or pre-professional types of schools were national languages; English, Greek, and Latin were only taught in more advanced types of schools.

As with the present, then, language education was a controversial topic. Hence, we cannot review not only a large quantity of statements from different actors but also statistics produced by the contemporary administration, registering which languages were included in the curricula of all 25 cantons that existed at the time. We have taken these statistics as a point of departure for our analysis and also use them to verify whether our conclusions hold for the whole of Switzerland. Nevertheless, we restricted our more detailed analysis of curricular contents to nine cantons. We have been careful to include in our selection at least one canton from each of the three major linguistic groups as well as two of the four multilingual sub-states. For each linguistic category, we chose the larger cantons, those composed of both rural and more urban areas, because they tend to influence the policies chosen by cantons with smaller education administrations.[26] For German-speaking Switzerland, we have selected the cantons of Argovia, Basel-City, Lucerne, and Zurich; for French-speaking Switzerland, the canton of Vaud; for Italian-speaking Switzerland, the canton of Ticino. Bern and Fribourg are bilingual cantons, the first with a majority of German speakers, the second with a majority of French speakers. When the development of these nine cantons did not seem to match those of other cantons of the same language group, we drew on evidence from additional cantons (e.g., Geneva in section four).

---

[26] Anja Giudici, "Una centralizzazione passata dalla porta di servizio? Il federalismo scolastico: origini, evoluzione e sfide contemporanee," in *Federalismo svizzero: attori, strutture, processi*, ed. Sean Mueller and Anja Giudici (Locarno: Dadò, 2016).

To analyse our sources, we relied on the methodologies developed for explaining political outcomes that focus on the argumentative side of politics.[27] We depart from the presupposition that, by analysing actors' argumentation and how they legitimate their preferred political outcome, we can distil the beliefs and interests that shape their particular position. In our specific case, this approach allows us to discern how actors use what they understand to be Switzerland's linguistic identity, or other – e.g., economic or pedagogical – arguments, to argue for or against curricular reforms. Retracing how these arguments are pitted against each other in the political process, carefully assessing the actors' position in the polity, we explain what influenced (and what did not influence) our outcome of interest: language curricula.

Renegotiating Switzerland's linguistic identity: 1914–1945

Tensions between Switzerland's linguistic groups were in the making since the late nineteenth century, mostly because of the economic disparities between them.[28] However, the outbreak of the First World War exacerbated these hostilities and added to them a new – identity-related – dimension. In fact, it quickly became clear that confronted by Germany and France's engagement in a devastating war against each other, German-speaking public opinion and French-speaking public opinion were supporting their respective neighbour: The danger of Switzerland falling apart along its

---

[27] Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough, *Political Discourse Analysis* (London: Routledge, 2012); Nina Tannenwald, "Ideas and explanation: Advancing the theoretical agenda," *Journal of Cold War Studies* 7, no. 2 (2005): 13–42.

[28] Pierre du Bois, "Mythe et réalité du fossé pendant la Première Guerre mondiale," in *Union et division des Suisses,* ed. Pierre du Bois (Lausanne: L'aire, 1983), 65–91.

internal language borders became real.[29] Suddenly, as contemporary commentators diagnosed the formation of a "ditch" between its two major language groups, the country's linguistic diversity, which had hitherto been taken for granted, seemed to have become a "political weakness".[30]

The political and intellectual elite reacted quickly. The government toured the country giving "unification speeches", patriotic societies created new national commemorations,[31] and intellectuals proposed solutions for overcoming Switzerland's internal divisions. They all reached the same diagnosis: The Swiss were identifying with Germany or France instead of Switzerland because the country lacked its own comprehensive cultural identity. They linked the creation of such a 'Swiss identity' and 'culture' to the ability of the elites of the different language regions to communicate with each other. As stated by one of the protagonists of the campaign for national unification, the writer Konrad Falke, only school could prepare them for this task:

> Der Unterricht in den drei Landessprachen ist der eigentliche Grund und Boden, auf dem das Gefühl einer eidgenössischen Kulturgemeinschaft wachgerufen und herangebildet werden kann […] die einzige Möglichkeit, die künftigen geistigen Führer für ihr Zusammenwirken in allen eidgenössischen Fragen vorzubereiten.[32]

---

[29] du Bois, "Mythe et réalité du fossé pendant la Première Guerre mondiale"; Georg Kreis, *Insel der unsicheren Geborgenheit. Die Schweiz in den Kriegsjahren 1914-1918* (Zurich: NZZ, 2014).

[30] Karl Spitteler, "Unser Schweizer Standpunkt. Rede von Carl Spitteler gehalten vor der Neuen Helvetischen Gesellschaft, Gruppe Zürich, am 14. Dezember 1914," *Zeitfragen* 16/17 (2011).

[31] Andreas Kley, "Magistrale Demonstration der nationalen Einigkeit," in *Der vergessene Krieg,* ed. Konrad J. Kuhn and Béatrice Ziegler (Baden: hier + jetzt, 2014), 197–209.

[32] [Teaching three national languages is the only real basis by which the sense of a Swiss cultural community can be awakened and educated [...] the only possibility to prepare the future intellectual leaders for their cooperation in all Swiss issues (translation AG/SG)].

During the First World War and in the inter-war period, such ideas were still controversial. A number of intellectuals and conservative politicians rejected the idea of a 'Swiss culture' as a matter of principle. For them, amalgamating what they conceived as distinct linguistic cultures would have a negative impact on the intellectual and moral development of individuals and the country.[33] In the words of the Swiss intellectual Gonzague de Reynold, to be a good Swiss, one had to: "être le Suisse d'une langue, de *sa* langue, en non cette espèce d'hybride, de 'déraciné de l'intérieur', dont l'accroissement est un danger pour l'existence même de la Suisse".[34] Moreover, these propositions were only meant for the elite and quickly lost political relevance as the linguistic tensions were soon overshadowed by social tensions, culminating in a general strike in November 1918.[35]

These forms of resistances all faded in the 1930s, when fascist and nationalist movements, standing in for the absolute need to unify similar linguistic territories into one nation-state, became stronger throughout Europe and in Switzerland itself.[36] Afraid of a repetition of the linguistic divisions experienced during the First World War, the

---

Konrad Falke, *Der schweizerische Kulturwille* (Zurich: Rascher & Cie, 1914). See also Anja Giudici and Karin Manz, "Der Versuch eines politischen Kulturtransfers top-down: das Programm zur Nationalen Erziehung (1914–1924)," *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Bildungswissenschaften* 39 (forthcoming).

[33] See: e.g., Francesco Chiesa, *Svizzera e Ticino* (Lugano: Tipografia Luganese, 1914); Alfred Lombard, *Une terre une langue* (Lausanne: Gazette de Lausanne, 1929).

[34] [be the Swiss of one language, of *his/hers* language, and not this type of hybrid, of 'internally rootless' individual, whose growth is a danger for Switzerland's very existence (emphasis in the original, translation AG/SG)] Gonzague de Reynold, "Sur le bilinguisme," *Bieler Jahrbuch / Annales Biennoises* 2 (1928): 101–16, 110–11.

[35] Hans Amstutz, *Das Verhältnis zwischen deutscher und französischer Schweiz in den Jahren 1930–1945* (Aarau: Sauerländer, 1996).

[36] Lucien Criblez, *Zwischen Pädagogik und Politik*.

entire Swiss political and intellectual elite supported the government's so-called

"Spiritual Defence" policy (*Geistige Landesverteidigung*),[37] an overall programme that

explicitly rejected the idea of 'one nation – one state – one language', as stated by the

Swiss Federal Government in 1937:

> Wenn andere Staaten aus der Gemeinschaft der Sprache sich bildeten und in der
> Einheit der Sprache eine Säule ihrer Kraft erblicken, so entspricht es der Eigenheit
> unseres eidgenössischen Staatsgedenkens, seine Grösse in der Zusammenfassung,
> im Zusammenleben und im Zusammenklingen all jener Sprachen zu finden, die mit
> der schweizerischen Erde verwachsen sind und zum sprachlichen Erbgut unserer
> Nation gehören.[38]

For legitimating their state's existence, the Swiss elites opposed the idea that

only monolingual and monocultural communities could form a 'nation'. In their eyes,

four languages were part of Switzerland's "genetic make-up" and identity, hence

Switzerland's multilingual and multicultural population was a 'nation' too. It thus

constituted a legitimate base for an independent and sovereign Swiss state. Support for

this idea extended to the population at large. In 1938, in a nationwide referendum, more

than ninety per cent of Swiss voters endorsed the idea by officially recognising

---

[37] Lucien Criblez, "Sprachliche Vielfalt als nationales Bildungsprogramm," in *Krisen und Stabilisierung. Die Schweiz in der Zwischenkriegszeit,* ed. Sebastian Guex et al. (Zurich: Chronos, 1998), 181–96; Pierre du Bois, "Mythe et réalité du fossé pendant la Première Guerre mondiale," in *Union et division des Suisses,* ed. Pierre du Bois (Lausanne: L'aire, 1983), 65–91.

[38] [If other states were formed from a shared language and observe in their language community the pillar of their strength, the characteristic of our Swiss state ideal finds it greatness in the aggregation, in the living together and sounding together of all those languages that grew together with the Swiss earth and are part of the linguistic genetic make-up of our nation (translation AG/SG)]. Schweizerischer Bundesrat, "Botschaft des Bundesrates über die Anerkennung des Rätoromanischen als Nationalsprache," *Bundesblatt* 89, no. 22 II (1937): 1–32, 21.

Romansh as Switzerland's fourth 'national' language.[39] Not cultural uniformity but (limited) cultural diversity should be fostered to strengthen Switzerland's national identity: "Was uns nottut, ist nicht eine fortschreitende Vereinheitlichung, sondern vielmehr die Pflege der Eigenart, der Verschiedenartigkeit und Mannigfaltigkeit".[40]

This time, multilingualism was supposed to not only characterise the Swiss national identity or its future leaders but also embody all its actual and future citizens. Inquiries entered by members of the federal parliament demanded not only the introduction of compulsory exams in the three national languages for all grammar school graduates but also the examination of the possibility of including a second national language in primary schools' curricula. Both propositions were legitimated by the need to foster Switzerland's multilingual national identity.[41] By the end of the Second World War, learning multiple national languages had become an integral part of Switzerland's patriotic education: "Ein solches Volk muss in seiner Gesamtheit sich in dieser Mehrsprachigkeit bewegen können, es muss sie verstehen und mittragen helfen,

---

[39] 91.6 per cent of voters agreed to make Romansh the fourth "national" language inscribed in the Swiss Constitution. German, French, and Italian thereby became "official" languages. Swissvotes, die Datenbank der eidgenössischen Volksabstimmungen, www.swissvotes.ch (accessed June 29, 2016).

[40] [What we need is not a progressive unification but rather care for the characteristic, for variety and diversity (translation AG/SG)]. Schweizerischer Bundesrat, "Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Organisation und die Aufgaben der schweizerischen Kulturwahrung und Kulturwerbung," *Bundesblatt* 90, no. 50 II (1938), 985–1035, 1025.

[41] See Schweizerischer Bundesrat, "Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Organisation und die Aufgaben der schweizerischen Kulturwahrung und Kulturwerbung," 986–90.

mit anderen Worten, ein solches Volk muss *sprachenkundig* sein", declared the
ensemble of the cantonal education ministers in 1945.[42]

Impact on language curricula reforms

As noted above, with the inclusion of multilingualism into the dominant and official
discourse on Switzerland's national identity came political propositions asking to
reform the countries' language curricula accordingly.

On the one hand, members of the federal parliament requested a change in the
number and selection of foreign languages taught in Swiss schools. In grammar schools,
a third national language should be added to the curricula, making German, French, and
Italian (along with other languages such as English and Latin) compulsory for all
graduates. A second proposition by Member of Parliament Henry Vallotton wanted the
government to study the possibility of introducing a second national language in
primary school curricula. For him and his supporters, national defence rested "on
mutual knowledge and stronger unification among the races, the denominations, and the
different languages of the Swiss people".[43]

On the other hand, federal politicians requested a reform of these subjects' aims
and contents. As declared by Federal Minister Felix Calonder in 1918, to foster

---

[42] [Such a people must be able to move inside this multilingualism in its entirety, it must
understand it and take part in it. In other words, such as people must be *language-knowledgeable* (emphasis in the original, translation AG/SG)]. Emma L. Bähler, "Die
Pflege der Landessprachen an den schweizerischen Schulen," *Archiv für das
schweizerische Unterrichtswesen* 31 (1945): 20–50, 26.

[43] [auf einer gegenseitigen Kenntnis und einer engern Einigung unter den Rassen, Konfessionen
und den verschiedenen Sprachen der Eidgenossen (translation AG/SG)]. Proposition
Vallotton quoted by J. Michel, "Nationale Erziehung an den höheren Schweizerischen
Mittelschulen," *Bündner Schulblatt* 2, no. 5 (1943): 174–211, 185.

Switzerland's national identity, the teaching of national languages should convey more knowledge about the other linguistic groups' culture rather than focus on pupils' future professional and practical needs.[44]

The request to mandate the teaching of the three Swiss languages in grammar schools did not stand a chance. To date, only the graduates of the Romansh- and Italian-speaking minorities must learn both German and French along with Romansh/Italian. They already did before 1914. Thus, let us focus on the calls for introducing a second national language in upper primary schools and for conveying more cultural knowledge through language teaching. *Table 1* lists the foreign language curricula reforms made from 1914 to 1961 in the nine cantons we analysed more closely. We looked for not only changes in the number and selection of languages in curricula but also changes in the teaching contents and aims in language curricula in force at the time.

[TABLE 1 AROUND HERE]

Table 1 shows that only two out of these nine cantons changed the number and selection of languages included in curricula in the direction requested by federal politics, thus adding the possibility or the obligation to learn a second national language (Bern and Ticino). Five cantons did not change anything in this regard (Argovia, Fribourg, Lucerne, Schwyz, and Zurich), and three cantons took measures contrary to those requested by federal legislators: Basel-City and Vaud both abolished the possibility or the duty to learn a second national language in their upper primary schools. We find a similar situation with regard to the contents of language curricula. During the period analysed, some cantons have added an introductory statement to their

---

[44] Quoted in *Rendiconto del Dipartimento della Pubblica Educazione* (Bellinzona: Grassi, 1917), 45–6. See also the propositions listed in: Schweizerischer Bundesrat, "Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Organisation und die Aufgaben der schweizerischen Kulturwahrung und Kulturwerbung," 986–90.

curricula's language teaching section (Bern, Lucerne), intimating the patriotic function of teaching a second national language. However, as with the other cases, they did not change their curricula's contents.

The first conclusion to be drawn from these results is the following: The overarching change in Switzerland's national identity did not affect all its different sub-states' language curricula in the same manner. An explanation of the cantons' differing responses can be found by analysing the debates and political processes that led to the (non-)reforms in each of the cases. First, let us turn to the cases that raised the importance of teaching a second national language in their compulsory types of schools and ask the following question: Did the discussion on Switzerland's linguistic national identity affect these decisions?

Including a new national language in primary school: An issue of national identity?

Since 1894, the bilingual canton of *Bern* had allowed its communes to institute "advanced" upper primary schools that, unlike the regular schools, included the teaching of French in the German-speaking part and the teaching of German in the French-speaking part of the canton.[45] With the curriculum reform of 1947/1952 and the primary school law of 1951, this type of school was abolished, and all Bernese communes were permitted to include elective teaching of French and teaching of German in their regular upper primary schools. The cantonal authorities ensured

---

[45] *Gesetz über den Primarunterricht des Kantons Bern*, 1894, Art. 73. See also: Christian Lerch, *100 Jahre Sekundarschule Sumiswald: Festschrift zur Jubiläumsfeier am 2. September 1934* (Sumiswald: Buchdr. Sumiswald, 1934); Anja Giudici and Sandra Grizelj, "Vom Berufs- und Elitewissen zum Garant des nationalen Zusammenhalts. Die Fremdsprachen in den Lehrplänen der Schweizer Volksschulen seit 1830," *Babylonia* 74, no. 3 (2014): 60–5.

financial support for communes that wanted but could not afford to introduce them.

The fact that, according to the curricula of the canton's German-speaking part, the teaching of French was meant to "awaken the joy for the language and way of life of our French-speaking co-Swiss"[46] seems to indicate that the reinforcement of the teaching of French and the teaching of German was meant to reunite the two linguistic communities and bridge their differences. However, it was directed towards mitigating the inner-cantonal conflict between the Protestant Bernese German-speakers and the Catholic Bernese French speakers rather than fostering a more encompassing Swiss national identity. In fact, simultaneously and for the same reason, the cantonal parliament deliberated on a new article for regulating the official languages in the cantonal constitution. In 1950, the majority of the Bernese parliament decided to recognise both German and French as the canton's 'official' languages.[47]

However, the discussions on the reform of the cantonal education law and its curricula show the importance of yet another aspect. By enhancing the possibility of learning French or German as second languages in primary school, the Bernese representatives first and foremost claimed to raise this type of school's statute and, in doing so, prepare pupils for a broader range of professions, some of which required the knowledge of both languages.[48] The fact that individuals and communes were left free

---

[46] [im Schüler Freude an Sprache und Lebensart unserer welschen Miteidgenossen wecken (translation AG/SG)]. Erziehungsdirektion Bern, *Unterrichtsichtsplan für die Primarschulen des Kantons Bern, Erster Teil: Der verbindliche Plan* (Bern: Staatlicher Lehrmittelverlag, 1961), 166.

[47] Tagblatt des Grossen Rates des Kantons Bern, *Jurassische Angelegenheiten, Verfassungsänderungen* (Bern: Buchdruckerei Neukomm, 1949), 529; Iwar Werlen, *Der zweisprachige Kanton Bern* (Bern: Haupt, 2000).

[48] Tagblatt des Grossen Rates des Kantons Bern, *Gesetz über die Primarschule, Zweite Beratung* (Bern: Buchdruckerei Neukomm AG, 1951), 508.

to decide whether it was in their interest to invest in teaching/learning a second national language proves the weight of economic rationales in the reform. Those who argued for the introduction of new languages in primary school along nationalist lines stressed the fact that this was the only institution where it could be made compulsory for all future citizens. However, learning a second language did not become compulsory in Bern.

Similar causes can be identified for the second case in our sample that increased the weight of the national languages in mandatory education. *Ticino,* home of the Swiss Italian-speaking minority, introduced French as an eligible subject in upper primary schools in 1922, making it mandatory in 1936.

In the context of the two World Wars, Ticino had found itself isolated from its main cultural point of reference: Italy. Not having its own university and being one of Switzerland's poorest regions, in the past, the canton had retained strong contacts with its southern neighbour. Much of Ticino's labour force emigrated to Italy, and most of its students had been attending Italian universities.[49] With the contact with Italy becoming increasingly problematic due to fascism's expansionist policies, the cantonal authorities decided to facilitate the emigration of Ticino's students and workforce to French- and German-speaking Switzerland. To that end, some cantonal politicians even asked for the introduction of two additional languages in mandatory schooling, claiming that both French and German were indispensable for all Ticinesi: "Date le speciali condizioni del nostro Cantone in quotidiano contatto con genti di stirpe tedesca […] bisogna

---

[49] Ernst Weibel, "Les relations entre Romands et Tessinois d'un point de vue économique, poliitque et culturel de 1848 à 1980," in *Union et division des Suisses*, ed. Pierre du Bois (Lausanne: L'aire, 1983), 185–200.

oggettivamente riconoscere l'assoluta necessità che il popolo nostro nella sua scuola più popolare, la scuola maggiore, riceva delle nozioni di lingua tedesca".[50]

      As in Bern, the argumentation was informed by economic and cantonal rather than by federal and nationalistic concerns. We find such economic arguments for teaching a second national language especially in French-, Italian-, and Romansh-speaking Switzerland. The need to learn the language of the rest of the country was much more present with the linguistic minorities. Geneva's curricula state that German (compulsory for the last year of schooling in the 1930s), the language of "seven-tenths" of Switzerland, is important not only from "a national perspective" but also because "for French-speaking Swiss who ignore this language, it is much more difficult to obtain interesting jobs in trade, banking, and industry".[51] Similar to Geneva, the other French-speaking cantons have repeatedly introduced and re-eliminated the teaching of German from their primary school curricula mainly due to economic concerns.[52]

---

[50] [because of the particular conditions of our canton, which is in daily contact with people of the German race […] one must objectively acknowledge the absolute necessity for our people to receive some knowledge of the German language in its most popular type of school, the scuola maggiore (translation AG/SG)] Member of Parliament Spartaco Zeli, in *Processi verbali del Gran Consiglio Ticinese* (Bellinzona: Grassi, 1933), 289.

[51] [les Suisses romands qui ignorent cette langue obtiennent plus difficilement des places intéressantes dans le commerce, la banque et l'industrie (translation AG/SG)]. *Plan d'études de l'école primaire,* quoted in: Edouard Blaser, "L'enseignement des langues nationales à l'école primaire," *Études pédagogiques* 39, (1948): 95–108, 102.

[52] In the time-frame that we are analysing, five cantons were mainly French-speaking. Of these, Geneva and Neuchâtel knew compulsory German teaching in their primary schools. In Fribourg and Vaud, German (French in Fribourg's German-speaking part) was elective and restricted to the very last years of schooling. In bilingual Valais, a second language was only taught in secondary education. For German teaching in French-speaking Switzerland, see also: Blaise Extermann, *Une langue étrangère et nationale. Histoire de l'enseignement de l'allemand en Suisse romande* (Neuchâtel: Alphil, 2013).

Ultimately, in Ticino, the introduction of two new languages in mandatory schooling was judged to be too costly for the canton's shaky finances. French was the only language included in upper primary school. As argued by cantonal Education Minister Enrico Celio, the economic and cultural relations with French-speaking communities were of greater importance than those with German-speaking communities. Additionally, he considered German to be much more difficult to learn for Italian speakers.[53] However, the cantonal administration encouraged the introduction of the teaching of French for yet another reason. Education authorities were trying to allow pupils coming from Ticino's more remote valleys to access advanced secondary schools. The latter were placed only in the canton's central cities; by introducing French in upper primary schools, pupils from rural communities were supposed to be allowed to stay at home longer and to transfer to grammar schools later and more easily, without "loosing time" because they lacked French skills.[54]

To continue, in both Bern and Ticino, the introduction of a second national language in upper primary school curricula was the result of complex negotiations, where arguments about national identity were overshadowed by the respective cantonal economic and political interests. Additionally, both reforms are localised into encompassing rearrangements of the education system intended to upgrade primary school (Bern) or enhance rural communities' participation in advanced types of schools (Ticino).

---

[53] Enrico Celio in Schweizerische Konferenz der kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren (EDK), "Protokoll der ersten Sitzung der Kommission für nationale Erziehung der EDK in Olten vom 7. März 1938," file ED B90, Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt.

[54] Consiglio di Stato, "Messaggio in punto al riordinamento della Scuola primaria di grado superiore," *Processi verbali del Gran Consiglio Ticinese* (Bellinzona: Grassi, 1922), 473.

Legitimating non-reforms and the elimination of national languages from curricula

That the new multilingual conceptions engraved in Switzerland's national identity were not reason enough to engage in a curricular reform is also shown by the development of those cantons that were part of the large majority that did not change its curricula during the time-frame analysed. By 1938, nobody was questioning the importance of teaching national languages for securing the country's patriotism *in principle*. However, both cantonal authorities and teacher organisations – the most powerful actors engaged in curriculum formulation – tended to disavow the *feasibility* of teaching a second national language in upper primary schools.

At the time, the themes dominating Swiss teacher publications were how to put into practice progressive education's calls for aligning educational contents to pupils' interests and abilities, how to raise the weight of teachers in politics, and how to solve the "crisis of mother-tongue education" that had been diagnosed by pedagogues at all levels of the education system. It is not surprising, then, that teacher organisations were somewhat sceptical towards the idea of adding yet another subject to primary school curricula. Moreover, they judged learning a new language to be an intellectual endeavour that, unlike mother-tongue education or practical activities, was somewhat ineffective from an educational perspective.[55] Teachers were not against 'nationalising' education; their massive commitment to programmes meant to foster a Swiss 'national'

[55] Schweizerischer Lehrerverein, "Nationale Erziehung," *Schweizerische pädagogische Zeitschrift* 25, no. 5/6 (1915): 233–51; H.C., "Krisis des muttersprachlichen Unterrichts," *Schweizerische Lehrerzeitung* 75, no. 34 (1930): 439–64, 439.

identity has been documented by several studies.[56] However, as the Swiss teacher organisation maintained in its official statement regarding the programme of "Spiritual Defence", for them, national identity could be instilled through the existing subjects, especially by giving more space to patriotic topics in mother-tongue education, singing, or history. But they valued adding a new subject to the curricula, which they taught were already overloaded, to be a somewhat inadequate measure.[57]

The cantons' political representatives adopted teachers' worries about the state of mother-tongue education. It was one of the main arguments that they used for legitimating their negative stance towards the federal authorities' demand for an increased teaching of national languages in primary schools. The discussions that preceded the 25 cantonal Education Ministers' official statement regarding this federal demand in 1938 show: Their interest for adding a new costly subject to the curricula – a subject for which the great majority of them observed no immediate economic or pedagogical need – was very limited. A small number of cantonal representatives, such as Minister Nadig from German-speaking St. Gallen, indeed argued that, to strengthen the country's national identity, upper primary classes should become bilingual. But they were clearly outnumbered by their colleagues. Minister Müller from the canton of Glarus stated that "pupils at this stage should learn proper German". He was supported

[56] Ingrid Brühwiler, "The Swiss *Willensnation* at risk: teachers in the cultural gap during the First World War," *History of* Education 44, no. 2 (2015): 171–86; Criblez, *Zwischen Pädagogik und Politik*.

[57] Emma L. Bähler, "Die nationale Erziehung," *Archiv für das schweizerische Unterrichtswesen* 24, (1938): 36–50.

by Minister Hafner from the influential canton of Zurich, who simply considered that "the pupils of upper primary school are generally unable to learn a second language".[58]

When formulating their official response to the Swiss government, Müller and Hafner, and with them the majority of the present ministers, vetoed even the vaguest phrase if it were to somehow imply the desirability of cantons to concretely invest in the teaching of a second national language in primary school. In their final version, they agreed not only that teaching national languages created "important bonds between the linguistic territories" but also that such policies were endangering mother-tongue education, that they would overload the curricula, and that they did not respect the cantons' differential interests.[59]

Similar reasons led cantons to eliminate the possibility or the obligation to learn a second national language in primary school in the 1920s and 1930s, despite all the discussions on the importance of languages for Switzerland's national identity. We will only recall one.[60] In 1929, Basel-city's teacher organisations, its major political and economic parties, and the authorities all agreed on the necessity of abolishing the mandatory teaching of French in upper primary schools. In doing so, they were very well aware that this decision was going against the "nationalistic attempts" of the

---

[58] EDK, "Protokoll der 1. Sitzung der Kommission für nationale Erziehung der EDK, Olten 7. März 1938," file ED B90, Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt. In 1937, the education department of the canton of Zurich had formally forbidden its primary teachers to teach French in their classes – which some of them where doing due to parents' requests. Erziehungsdirektion Zürich, "Französischunterricht an den Primarklassen 7 und 8," *Amtliches Schulblatt des Kantons Zürich* (1937): 181–2.

[59] EDK, "An das Eidgenössische Departement des Innern, Frauenfeld, den 30. Juni 1938," Staatsarchiv Basel: ED B90; Bähler, "Die nationale Erziehung".

[60] Other cantons that made similar decisions include the German-speaking canton of Schaffhausen and the French-speaking canton of Vaud.

period.[61] However, they perceived the high rate of repeat students in their schooling system to be a much more imminent problem than strengthening the country's national identity, a problem that they tackled by following the advice of pedagogical experts. Hence, they strengthened the 'practical' orientation of upper primary school, introducing and boosting contents such as woodwork, gardening, and German – and made the teaching of French elective.[62]

Reform but also stability in teaching contents and aims

As noted above, a second political proposition advanced by the federal government requested a reform of the aims and contents of language teaching. Before the First World War, the teaching of a second national language in non-academic types of schools (so-called secondary schools) was directed at acquiring practical communication skills and some cognitive awareness of the language's grammar. However, Swiss authorities now argued that pupils should not only learn the skills that would be necessary for their professional future and some formal knowledge about language structures. The contents conveyed by curricula should make them also become familiar with the other linguistic groups' cultural and literary traditions.

Our analysis of the curricular contents in nine cantons shows that the idea that language teaching was important for the country's identity and unity entered curricula. We find that is sometimes noted in the declarations of intent that precede curricula's language teaching sections. However, not all cantons added such a remark, and its

---

[61] Th., "Zur Umgestaltung der Sekundarschule," *Nationalzeitung*, Mai 25, 1916.

[62] See: e.g., Freiwillige Schulsynode, "Die allgemeine Mittelschule," 1919, file ED A18, Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt; Wanner, "Rede von Dr. Wanner, Referent zum neusprachlichen Gymnasium an einer Konferenz der schweizerischen Gymnasialrektoren, 30. Januar 1920," file ED A18, Staatsarchiv Basel-Stadt.

introduction was frequently not accompanied by a corresponding reform of the subjects'
contents.

In this regard, the case of the 1915 school programme for the secondary school
(*collège classique*) in Lausanne (in the French-speaking canton of Vaud) is
paradigmatic. In the introduction, the school authorities have quoted a speech given to
the institute's pupils by M. Freymond. The member of the patriotic 'New Helvetic
Society' warns the pupils that, while this may have been the case in the past, at present,
one could not become a "good Swiss" by remaining in his (the *collège* was meant for
boys only) "cantonal particularism". Fortunately, schooling would help them overcome
this limitation:

> Vous apprendrez à connaître, mieux qu'on ne l'a fait jusqu'à présent, choses et
> gens d'outre Sarine […]. Zürich, Bâle, Berne, vous deviendront des cités familières
> dans leurs pierres et dans leurs âmes. Vous lirez nos écrivains nationaux de langue
> allemande ou italienne.[63]

However, despite the nationalistic verve and the direct reference to the teaching
functionality of the national languages for Switzerland's "political existence", the
curricular contents that follow look exactly the same as those of the previous years:
Neither the teaching of Italian nor contents related to Swiss literature or culture have
been introduced.

---

[63] [You will come to know, better than we did in the past, things and people from the other side
of the Sarine [the river that runs on the border between the German- and the French-
speaking part of Switzerland, AG/SG]. Zurich, Basel, Bern will become familiar cities for
you, in their stones and in their souls. You will read our national writers of the German
and Italian tongue (translation AG/SG)]. M. Freymond, "Allocution prononcée le 24
janvier 1915 par M. Freymond, membre de la Nouvelle Société Helvetique," *Programme
des cours Collège classique cantonal Lausanne* (Lausanne: s.n., 1915): 11–19.

Similar situations can be found in Bern and Lucerne, where authorities have added new introductions to the French-teaching indications, referring to the subject's patriotic function. Lucerne's 1934 secondary school curriculum declares: "Der Unterricht in unsern Landessprachen hat nicht nur eine praktische, sondern auch eine vaterländische Aufgabe zu erfüllen. Er hilft mit Brücken zu schlagen zwischen der romanischen und der deutschen Schweiz";[64] a similar statement precedes Bern's curricula (see the previous section). Nevertheless, in both cases, the introduction is followed by indications of the language, focusing on pronunciation and the understanding of French texts, as with those before. French-speaking Switzerland and its culture are not noted again.

Conclusions

As with much of the work on nation-building and on curricula's role therein, the studies that we noted at the beginning of this paper all assume or postulate a direct effect of a state's dominant or official national and linguistic identity on its language curricula. Our paper discusses the general validity of this claim by asking whether the change in Switzerland's national linguistic identity between 1914 and 1945 was followed by corresponding reforms in the country's language curricula. Indeed, we can establish a connection between national linguistic identities and language curricula. As outlined above, the inclusion of Switzerland's multilingualism in the conception of national identity advanced by Swiss authorities and federal politics during the time frame analysed led these same actors to request the inclusion of multiple languages in the

---

[64] [National language teaching is supposed to fulfil not only a practical, but also a patriotic task. It helps build bridges between the Roman and the German part of the country (translation AG/SG)]. Erziehungsrat Luzern, *Lehrplan für die zweiklassigen Sekundarschulen des Kantons Luzern vom 23. Februar 1934* (Luzern: s.n., 1934), 14.

language curricula. However, to summarise our empirical findings on the *actual* curriculum reforms implemented by the authorities during this time frame (i.e., until 1961): *a*) this overarching shift in its linguistic and national identity did not influence the county's curricula evenly, given that we observe that the actual (non-)reforms differ along regional criteria as well as by the types of schools concerned; and, *b*) subsequently, referring to the country's national identity is insufficient to explain these reforms.

The reforms that were implemented from 1914 and 1961 are sometimes affected by the discussion of national identity. However, they also frequently follow the diverse economic rationales of the cantonal authorities their population as well as the convictions of cantonal leaders, of teachers and experts with regard to how languages are learnt and how useful learning multiple languages is for the development of pupils. Often, they are placed in the context of broader reforms of the schooling system. The relative weight of these arguments differ from case to case. Sometimes, on balance, cantonal authorities decided to go in the opposite direction from that preferred by those wanting the curricula to form citizens who personally embody the country's collective multilingual identity. In other cases, we find decisions that, at first glance, seem to be congruent with the nationalist rationale. However, if we actually analyse the political process that led the cantonal authorities to strengthen a second national language in their curricula, we find arguments other than the nationalist argument to be pivotal.

Certainly, to draw broader conclusions, we must take into account the fact that Switzerland is a federalist state with a particularly weak political centre and exceptionally powerful sub-states. Here, the cantons have the authority – within certain limits – to push through their own educational agendas and to go against the requests issued by the central state. This is not the case for other polities. One could also ask –

and some do –[65] whether the term 'national' is appropriate to qualify Switzerland's identity and would not be better used for the collective identities held by its cantons or language regions. However, as outlined above, the arguments used by cantonal authorities, teachers, and experts to prevent the curricular reforms endorsed at the overarching Swiss level were not grounded in a contrasting cantonal or regional 'national' identity. These actors brought into the decision-making process other understandings of what means could effectively be used to strengthen pupils' Swiss patriotism. Often, they relied on arguments of a different nature that seemed to outweigh the necessity of strengthening an overarching Swiss identity. We can expect that similar arguments and actors are relevant in the context of less federalised political systems.

Due to the high relevance of language in nationalisms, in the specific case of language curricula, the danger of wrongly assuming a direct influence of national identities on curricula because of some common characteristics (e.g., the languages included in a country's dominant linguistic identity and those included in its curricula), is particularly great. However, we would argue that our findings warn more generally against analyses that conceive of 'the state' as a unitary actor and its 'national' agenda

---

[65] Different political scientists have qualified Switzerland as a multinational state, arguing that it is the cantons or language regions that have a stronger 'national' character than Switzerland as a whole. Others hold against this view the fact that Switzerland's development generally emulated the nation-building process followed by its neighbours and state that the country should be qualified as a multilingual nation. On the former, see: Donald Ipperciel, "La Suisse: un cas d'exception pour le nationalisme?," *Swiss Political Science Review* 13, no. 1 (2007): 39–67; Will Kymlicka, *Multicultural citizenship. A liberal theory of minority rights* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). On the latter, see: Georg Kreis, ed., *Die Geschichte der Schweiz* (Basel: Schwabe, 2014); Nenad Stojanović, "Swiss nation state and its patriotism. A critique of Will Kymlicka's account of multinational states," *Polis*, no. 11 (2003): 45–94.

as an overall explanation for what curricula look like, without placing this assumption under empirical scrutiny. Which actors and groups make 'a state's' policy, what they understand to be 'national', and what conclusions they draw from this understanding for concrete policy measures, differ. These issues must be taken into account to avoid falling into the traps that Dale and Robertson have appropriately called 'statism' or 'nationalism'.[66]

Recently, the question of the relationship between language teaching and Switzerland's identity has come up again in what the Swiss French-speaking press has called Switzerland's "language war".[67] In the 1970s all cantons finally yielded in rendering the learning of a second national language compulsory for all pupils. However, this decision is now being partly overthrown, with some German-speaking cantons challenging the status of French in curricula by favouring English. Once again, different actors are pitting concerns about children's language learning capabilities, the importance of knowing English in a globalised economy, and the pedagogical effect of learning multiple languages at an early age the arguments of those, such as the federal authorities, who say that:

> le plurilinguisme est une caractéristique identitaire de la Suisse. C'est un de nos éléments de définition communs. C'est un des éléments de définition de notre appartenance à ce pays. Ce n'est pas juste quelque chose d'un peu ennuyeux ou d'un peu embêtant, mais c'est un des piliers identitaires de notre pays. Dans ce contexte, l'enseignement des langues nationales joue un rôle central pour favoriser la cohésion nationale.[68]

---

[66] Dale and Robertson, "Beyond methodological 'isms' in comparative education".

[67] "La guerre des langues est déclarée," *L'hebdo*, May 1st 2014, 8.

[68] [multilingualism is a characteristic of Swiss identity. It is one of our common elements of definition. It is one of the elements that define our membership in this country. It is not

Which side will affect future Swiss language curricula this time remains to be seen.

---

something that is a bit boring or a little annoying; it is one of the central pillars of our country's identity. In this context, the teaching of national languages plays a central role in supporting national cohesion (translation AG/SG)]). Alain Berset, *Amtliches Bulletin Ständerat, 17.12.2015,* www.parlament.ch (accessed Juni 26, 2016).