

## **Switzerland: ARGEV – Interkantonale Arbeitsgemeinschaft externe Evaluation von Schulen (Intercantonal Conference on External School Evaluation)**

The Intercantonal Conference on External School Evaluation incorporates all centers for evaluation services responsible for the external evaluation of compulsory schooling (grades 1 through 9) or its conceptual development in the German-speaking part of Switzerland. Switzerland is a federally structured state consisting of 26 cantons, all of which have their own system of public schools. Accordingly, every canton provides its own system of external school evaluation.

In 1999, the first center for evaluation services was set up in the canton of Zurich. In the proceeding years, various other cantonal centers emerged. The different cantonal stages of development correspond with the variety inherent in each canton's unique political and conceptual preconditions. While six cantons were still at the level of planning and conceptual design in 2008, three had already concluded their first comprehensive school evaluation.

The conceptual designs of the cantonal centers for evaluation services may be simplified into the following four approaches:

- Evaluation services as part of the teachers training academies (e.g. the cantons of Aargau, Berne and St. Gallen)
- Evaluation services integrated in the cantonal department of public schools (e.g. the cantons of Zurich, Thurgau, Basel Land and Schaffhausen)
- Independent evaluation teams authorized by a cantonal governmental department (e.g. the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden)
- Evaluation as part of school inspection (e.g. the cantons of Graubünden and Glarus)

In 2002, several cantons formed an association in order to enhance strategic collaboration across the German-speaking linguistic region, thereby providing the foundation on which ARGEV was established. In 2005, the Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education's German-speaking division provided ARGEV with an official mandate. Today, 20 German-speaking cantons as well as the Principality of Liechtenstein take part in this intercantonal conference. ARGEV has thus been assigned with a similar task for Switzerland as the SICI performs for Europe.

### **ARGEV objectives and competences**

With the foundation of an intercantonal committee, the ARGEV-Members aimed at strengthening four main objectives:

- Network promotion, both nationally and internationally
- Professionalization of external school evaluation, cultivation of knowledge and quality management
- Provision of basic principles, such as studies and project designs, introducing key topics of external school evaluation
- Positioning of the external school evaluation in the scope of the Swiss educational system

In order to achieve these goals, ARGEV regularly engages in informational exchanges with its members as well as national and international institutions. ARGEV holds various annual conferences, workshops, symposia and network meetings, develops programs of continuing education in collaboration with advanced (academic) training facilities, identifies current key topics and commissions further studies.

## **Studies and publications**

In recent years, ARGEV has commissioned various studies on subjects such as the relationship between external evaluation and performance measurement, the appraisal of formal instruction as part of the external school evaluation, or the assessment of small schools. ARGEV has further published „Schlüsselfragen zur Externen Schulevaluation“, a collection of essays on the key topics of external school evaluation. Major themes presently discussed are the evaluation of special education schooling, failing schools as well as questions concerning the effectiveness of external school evaluation and the relationship between external and internal evaluation. ARGEV provides documents on this various themes for download on the conference's own website and informs about the most recent developments in the field of external school evaluation ([www.argev.ch](http://www.argev.ch)).

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