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# Rhiannon Harris

# Final Report

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## Four-week teaching practice programme at the PH Zug

12 November 2015



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The experience that PH Zug together with Deakin University has given me a once in a lifetime learning opportunity. The four week teaching practice programme provided a unique and rich learning experience that I will no doubt benefit from both personally and professionally. I especially enjoyed the incorporation of attending PH Zug for one day of the week amongst practicum, this provided special insight into what life may look like for pre-service teachers here in Switzerland.

Overall I felt well informed and supported throughout my four week teaching practice PH Zug. I look forward to sharing my experiences with Deakin University, fellow students, family and friends on my return.

## 1. Information and Support

Receiving information and support from PH Zug and the International Office PH Zug on a regular basis assured me of the organisation and structure of the forthcoming program. I greatly appreciated receiving the information about with whom we would be staying, the day to day plan and travel information, in July. The three months prior to the program enabled me to thoroughly plan for time abroad, study and collate documents required for the teaching practice.

I found Patrick and Stephanie to be excellent with information and any questions prior to and throughout the placement program. Both were very friendly and approachable; I especially appreciated being accompanied from PH Zug to Tagesschule Elemeta on our first day. This made what may have been a daunting experience, both positive and personal.

The details of our observation visit to ISZL seemed to be somewhat vague. This was however managed and the morning proceeded well. Despite our enjoyment of the morning observation at ISZL, I do feel that this visit perhaps 'fell through the cracks'. Both the teacher and student-teacher (at ISZL) seemed to be unaware of what exactly was to happen for this visit (although they were very nice) and the students in both classes attended swimming and physical education after the initial hour. I suspect the size of the school may be part of the reason that details of our visit may have been a little overlooked. I make mention of this in order to give specific detail to my experience; this did not have any negative impact and I enjoyed learning about ISZL and the operations of an international school.

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Monica Roth as a mentor teacher has given absolute support and encouragement throughout my placement. Despite her busy schedule she has provided thorough feedback and has always made herself available for clarification and advice. Her energy and drive are very inspiring to me as a pre-service teacher. Placement teaching experience in Elementa has encouraged me to 'think outside the box' in providing learning experiences for students. Monica has supported all of my ideas and suggestions for lessons, I feel extremely welcomed and encouraged by staff and students at Tagesschule Elementa. I look forward to incorporating many of their philosophies into my own.

as a buddy, Sophie has given such a friendly and personal touch to our stay here in Zug. She has been more than welcoming and provided a dinner of Raclette, not only for myself and Tarnee but for an additional 3 people (the students from the US including one visiting for the weekend) in her home. She has kept in touch regularly and makes suggestions for Zug's local events or social outings. I could not believe it when she asked if I wanted her to meet me at the airport. I have enjoyed her warmth and openness, having her as a friend has again, made this experience very personal.

## 2. Living in Switzerland

I was excited to learn that the teaching practice program entailed home-stay accommodation. Although this can take people 'out of their comfort zone', I believe that house sharing with local people gives the greatest insight into a town. I thoroughly enjoy hearing local knowledge on things such as the good place to eat, which supermarket has the best variety of vegetables or which bus has the quickest route!

The combination of staying with local people and also one of which is a student at PH Zug has been excellent. I have a comfortable room and enjoy the company of Corrine and Erich, they include me in meals and celebrations, I feel very at home. Though I initially thought Baar seemed very far away from the town, it is a short bus ride to most places and I very much appreciate the equal proximity it has to PH Zug *and also* Elementa.

Expense as well as the beauty were many people's advice once they knew I was to travel to Switzerland! I was therefore well aware of the what to expect with regards to being financially prepared. I feel lucky that all coffees and our lunch at Elementa is well provided for at no expense - this has saved both Tarnee and I a significant expense. As with travelling to many countries in the western world, expense limits the types of experiences one will have. I think this fact also makes the experiences that one does have, all the more special.

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### 3. Overall Program

The teaching practice program has been very well thought out. We were informed in advance from Monica that we would be teaching two 90 minute classes about specific Australian cultures. This gave us time to prepare anything we would want to bring for the lessons. We were to teach both lessons twice, to two different classes. I really enjoyed the opportunity to work on and refine the lessons whilst learning the style in which Elementa embodies.

We were given the opportunity to also teach all english lessons for years 5/6 (and some additional year levels) throughout or placement. I loved the autonomy we were given and especially enjoyed becoming more familiar with the students throughout our teaching experiences.

Tarnee and I also taught the Geometry lessons (of which instructions were in german), admittedly we did find this difficult and time consuming with our basic german skills, however the hard work paid off and the lessons seemed to be relatively successful.

I enjoyed our three days attending PH Zug. I think that 3 days is an adequate time to have an idea of lessons and the daily lives of the students there. The german lessons were fun and helpful. It also made me feel part of a community during my stay.

Overall, Elementa provided many varied teaching experiences for us. What is most significant to me is the *number* of teaching opportunities that we were given. The teaching program at PH Zug and Elementa has given me opportunities for teaching and learning which has surpassed anything I could have anticipated.

### 4. Personal evaluation of the stay

The teaching practice program has not only given me insight, but has provided the *experience* of the types of learning which takes place in the curriculum in the canton of Zug. Australia is going through transition into a national curriculum which of course, has arguments for and against. Learning from and conversing with teachers regarding the individual curriculums within cantons has provided some insight into how controversial this topic is.

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I believe gaining significant teaching experience in a country other than one's own can inspire new and innovative practices and beliefs. Elementa has given me many new ideas which can benefit my teaching practices and philosophies. I hope to bring these new practices and ideas into my future studies and teaching career.

*Positive Points:*

2. Teaching experience at Elementa.
3. The buddy program.
4. The availability for email or phone contact with teachers, buddies and staff at PH Zug and Elementa.

*Points for recommendations:*

1. A more organised visit to ISZL.
2. Longer teaching practice programs (I liked it too much!)
3. Perhaps the students at ISZL did not have as much language immersion (I would have found that a little limiting.)

Finally, I would like to thank PH Zug and Elementa for providing such a fulfilling and memorable experience. I will no doubt, continue to draw from this experience be it throughout my career or in everyday life.