REVIEWS OF NATIONAL POLICIES FOR EDUCATION
FRANCE

EXAMINERS’ REPORT

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ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT
Paris 1994

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At the request of the French authorities, the Education Committee at its 52nd session has decided to hold a review of France’s education policy on 3 May 1994 in Paris. This document contains the examiners’ report together with their recommendations, which may be used to prepare a follow-up report that the French authorities have been invited to submit to the Committee in Spring 1996.

It was not possible for this review report to cover all the problems faced by the French system of education. Following their analysis of the French context, the OECD examiners have highlighted four issues which, in their opinion, summarise some of the major themes of policy and strategy that France shares with many OECD Member countries.

These themes are as follows:

i) How to prevent exclusion through underachievement? The case of the educational priority areas.

ii) How does one ensure the quality and consistency of education within an increasingly diversified system? The case of teacher training.

iii) The problem of harmonising the dynamics of education and employment. The case of the new ”intermediate” diplomas (levels IV and III).

iv) How does one strengthen the innovative and strategic planning potential of the education system and strike a fresh balance?

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The French Delegation was chaired by Mr. François Bayrou, Minister of Education and included senior officials of the ministries of Education and of Higher Education and Research.

The Secretary-General of the OECD has agreed to make the report publicly available on his own responsibility.

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INTRODUCTION

"France, like other countries, is going through a period of profound change in its educational system" -- so begins the report of the OECD examiners in 1970¹. The challenge which France had had to face had been "broadly the same as that encountered in other highly urbanised and industrialised countries"² i.e. "new demographic factors" (higher birth rates and more migration due to speedier economic development) ..., "increased social demand for education" and "the imperative need to satisfy the economy’s requirements for skilled manpower"³. Thus, "as a result of the diverse reforms which the French authorities have been introducing over the last ten years in response to the successive challenges they have had to meet, there has gradually taken shape a new set of objectives for education"⁴.

Almost a quarter of a century after this report was written, it would seem to be an appropriate time to make an initial assessment of the reforms and innovations which, since the sixties, have radically changed the entire French educational structure. The OECD therefore agreed with the French authorities upon a further review of national education policy.

Clearly, however, the OECD examiners could not simply adopt the same procedure as followed in the sixties and seventies.

Since 1970, in the major industrial countries the general context of education policy has undergone far-reaching changes. Since the end of the sixties, like all the OECD’s activities in the field of education, its national policy reviews have been based on a very firm consensus as regards policy and norms centred on the conviction that the transcending of the traditional structures of European education, with its pronounced inequalities, was an essential factor in modernisation and democratisation, and an essential factor prerequisite for economic efficiency and social cohesion -- in short, that it was largely in the schools that the struggle between the two world systems, whose rivalry had dominated the postwar period, would be decided.

It was from this consensus, built around the ideal of a modern, democratic and effective education system, to be introduced by all the free nations in turn after many a deep-rooted tradition and entrenched privilege had been finally dislodged, that both the legitimacy of the examiners and the validity of the evaluation criteria were derived.

In the course of the last twenty years, this consensus has gradually unravelled. On the one hand, since the sixties the social and economic conditions which gave rise to it have radically changed. On the other hand, many of the objectives of the programme of reform and modernisation of national education systems, based on the consensus, have been achieved or even overtaken.

To these considerations must be added others of a more practical nature. Today a comprehensive and critical analysis of every part of the education system in France, including a detailed assessment of its
strengths and weaknesses, its dynamism and the problems that remain to be solved, such as the 1970 report by the Frankel team, would involve far more than anything foreign experts could possibly achieve within the framework of a mission of very limited duration. For some time, like the education systems of all the other major industrial countries, the French school and higher education and training system has been the focus of an intense national debate based on extensive well-resourced research, in-depth studies and statistical analyses. On this system and the institutions and circles that surround it France has produced a huge body of expertise of all kinds, legal and organisational, pedagogical and structural. It is hard to imagine what would have to be mobilised in the way of skills and knowledge to reproduce the examination procedure of the sixties.

Since it is clearly impossible to repeat the procedure of 1969/70, the examiners, in agreement with the OECD, have adopted an approach inspired by three main observations:

1) In the last ten or 20 years, the education systems of all the industrialised countries, radically transformed by developments broadly in keeping with the consensus for reform of the fifties and sixties, have shown signs of developing new problems relating both to their internal equilibrium and to their relations with their environment.

2) Leaving aside specifically national circumstances and configurations, by and large these problems are common to all the industrialised countries.

3) The innovations introduced or proposed in the various countries to deal with these problems, the difficulties encountered and the positive or negative effects observed could constitute a pool of common experience, access to which might be useful to all the developed nations.

An examination, with reference to the present state of the French education system, of a number of constituents of this common set of problems and an assessment of the effectiveness of the solutions implemented or being discussed in France should be of interest to both the French authorities -- especially those in the Ministry of Education -- and educators in the other countries of the OECD. The examiners’ report could thus give the former the benefit of a fresh look at the functioning of the French education system and at the risks and potentialities of the course it has recently been following, while enabling the latter to identify more accurately, in the light of the French example, some of the key problems of education and training which are springing up in all the highly developed societies and economies and to form a clearer idea of the appropriate response.

This approach will determine the structure of the report:

-- In Chapter I an attempt will be made to define more precisely, on the basis of the general educational consensus of the sixties, the common problems of education and training in the modern world.

-- Chapters II, III and IV will each be devoted to one of the three special problems which the authors have chosen to analyse in greater detail and to the specific replies which they have received or are in the process of receiving from the French authorities. The choice of these particular problems is explained in the last section of Chapter I.
In Chapter V an attempt will be made to highlight and examine certain common aspects of the policies and measures dealt with in the earlier chapters. The generalisation -- deliberately cautious -- proposed in this last chapter will be dominated by the question of the capacity and resources for strategic innovation and management available to the French education system.

This report could not have been written if the examiners had not had at their disposal the information and analyses indispensable to an understanding of the French national context. The examiners would like to thank those in charge of the organisations visited and the various persons whom they met for their extremely useful contributions as well as the officials of the Ministry of Education for arranging these meetings. They would also like to stress the excellent quality of the Background Report prepared by the French authorities in connection with the review and again to thank the authors of that document.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. Ibid., p. 35.
3. Ibid., p. 35.
4. Ibid., p. 50.
I. THE GENERAL CONTEXT

1. The broad consensus of the sixties on educational reform

In the sixties, in almost all the countries of the OECD and, in particular, in its European members there was a strong consensus that the traditional education system was in need of radical modernisation and reform.

There were two arguments at the centre of the discussion. The first, on which the OECD in particular placed emphasis, was technico-economic: economic growth presupposes that the soaring skilled labour requirements of a modern economy, based on science and technology, are fully met. The second was socio-political: satisfying the social demand for education, itself massively expanding, is an essential precondition of social integration and cohesion. The first chapter of the 1970 examiners’ report gives an excellent summary of the criticisms usually made of the traditional education system and the weaknesses which rendered it incapable of meeting this dual economic and social challenge. These criticisms were levelled, in the first place, at the content of education: "A primary feature of this kind of education has been the value it has placed on literary skills. The young should be taught, it has been assumed, to speak their own language well and to know the history of their country, those who remain in the school system long enough should also acquire competence in another living language and in Latin or Greek.1" "A second characteristic of traditional Continental education has been its abstractness. ... there has been an emphasis on ... analytic exposition ... and a relative neglect of manual skills and of types of learning and inquiry involving physical manipulation of the environment.2"

Above all, however, the criticisms were aimed at the fundamental inequality of the opportunities offered to children from different social classes: "In sum, the inherited system of European education, given its fundamental assumptions and ideals, functioned to sort the young out in such a way that the children of the upper and middle classes received the best schooling available with considerably greater frequency than the children of the lower classes. It is thus possible to describe the received system of schooling in Europe ... as a system not simply for educating people but for restricting access to privileged positions. This may have been, at best, only a half-conscious intention, but it was an objective consequence of the ideas that prevailed about the nature, purposes and relative priorities of education.3"

The broad thrust of the reforms introduced in most of the western industrial nations in the sixties and seventies with a view to modernising their education systems derive directly from these criticisms. Everywhere, beyond the specifically national traditions and the political disputes from which the practical reform measures eventually emerged it is possible to discern, albeit variously shaded and accented, the same three fundamental guiding principles:

a) Opening up and decompartmentalisation;
b) Quantitative expansion;
c) Diversification of streams.
Since the end of the fifties French education policy has been particularly active in pursuit of these three major objectives.

a) Opening up and decompartmentalisation

Opening up and decompartmentalisation were the key ideas of a wide-ranging and varied programme of innovation designed to give all of a country’s children, regardless of their social and cultural origin, the same opportunities within the education system, so as to avoid children being prematurely streamed and locked into certain school careers, to cater for their very different abilities and interests and to make it more possible to take into account the specific learning pace of individual students.

The expansion of pre-school education, the prolonging of the core curriculum for all primary children into the first stage of secondary schooling and the introduction of a complex information and guidance system for parents and pupils were some of the practical steps taken towards the achievement of these general objectives.

In France, the educational reform measures taken since the end of the fifties culminated in the far-reaching programme for the reform of lower secondary education of 1975, known as the "Haby reform".

b) Quantitative expansion of the education system

The quantitative expansion witnessed in all the industrial countries of Europe in the fifties and sixties was both the most visible expression and a structural prerequisite of a whole series of reforms: offering every sufficiently gifted child education and training in keeping with his or her abilities would not have been possible without a massive increase in the numbers of pupils and students; effectively overcoming the inequality of educational opportunity linked with social origin demanded a huge effort at the pre-primary level; broadening the traditional educational culture by incorporating the technical and scientific realities of the modern world could only succeed if all the pupils of a given age group remained longer in secondary education.

Two secondary effects did much to intensify the direct impact of these reforms:

-- on the one hand -- the "pull factors" -- there was the rapid growth of the social demand for education triggered by the progressive opening up of secondary and higher education to children from culturally disadvantaged backgrounds;

-- on the other -- the "push factors" -- there was the internal demand for highly qualified staff to meet the needs of an education system in full expansion.

In the sixties, under the combined influence of demographic trends and increased social demand, school attendance in France grew to such an extent that serious observers began to speak not so much of an expansion as of an "educational explosion".
c) Diversification of streams

The diversification of streams was a more or less obvious response to three imperatives closely linked with the opening up and expansion of the education system: first of all, it was necessary to respond with a broad range of courses to the extreme diversity of experience, interests and abilities of the children and young people from traditionally poorly educated groups who now formed (or at least were henceforth to form) the majority of the student body in secondary and higher education. In addition, it was necessary to meet the rapidly growing needs of the economy and public services for manpower with specialised scientific and technical skills. Finally, the diversification of streams was seen as a very effective means of counteracting the overcrowding of the traditional courses of study and the professional careers to which they led.

France launched itself along the path of diversification at a very early stage and on a very large scale -- in terms of both profiles and levels. It will suffice to recall the creation of scientific, technological and technicians' baccalauréats since the sixties and the successive innovations designed to professionalise the first cycle of higher education, in particular the Instituts Universitaires de Technologie (IUTs -- University Technology Institutes) and the Sections de Techniciens Supérieurs (STSs -- Higher Technician Sections).

2. The new place of education in society

Everywhere, the modernising reforms, carried out in accordance with the general consensus which we have just outlined, radically transformed the education system within the space of a few decades. The changes did not concern only the structures and internal functioning of the system, which had been the principal targets - though with national variations - of the reform policies. They concerned in particular the role of education in society. In every country, following the major reforms of the sixties and seventies, education and training, particularly at the secondary and higher levels, acquired an importance and a weight which, even at the end of the Second World War, were scarcely conceivable.

Four facts will serve to illustrate these changes:

a) The education system has become a powerful economic factor

In every country, since the early fifties, education and training expenditure as a percentage of GDP has increased sharply, indeed very sharply, and by the beginning of the nineties was running at a figure of about 6.4 per cent for the OECD countries as a whole (the mean was 6.1 per cent -- with a range from 5 to 7.4 per cent -- France coming very close to this figure with 6 per cent). In many countries, public expenditure on education is the biggest item in the budget. In 1991, the proportion of total public expenditure on all levels of education combined for the whole of the OECD amounted to 12.8 per cent. The mean was 11.8 per cent, the figure for France being slightly lower at 10.6 per cent. In the same year, a significant proportion (around 5 per cent) of the working population -- and a much higher percentage of the highly skilled segment of the labour force -- were performing teaching and non-teaching functions (for France the figure was 5.9 per cent)^4.
b) An increasing proportion of the population is spending more and more of its time in the education system

This is the result of several converging trends: the expansion of pre-primary education, the extension of the period of compulsory education, and the increasing number of young people who continue their secondary and/or higher education beyond the compulsory period.

In France, despite the general declining trend in the number of children of school age, apparent since 1975, the number of pupils and students has risen from a little over 6 million in 1950 to more than 15 million in 1992. Today, pupils and students represent a quarter of the total population. Year upon year, at least half of all French people are concerned in some way, as parent or pupil, with the everyday life of education, the quality of curricula and teachers, exam successes or failures, and the general quality of the reception they receive and the climate that prevails in the schools and universities.

c) Study and examination levels strongly influence career prospects and job opportunities

The more seriously the reformers of the national education system treated the preparation of young people to face the demands of today’s science and technology-oriented civilisation, the more they concentrated on having taught, within the education system, a maximum of the new skills demanded by employers, and the more the education system became a central agency for allocating jobs and opportunities. Everywhere, these trends have been further accentuated by the fact that the underlying evolution of the pattern of employment structure -- particularly in terms of both an increasing tertiarisation and a rapidly escalating demand for highly skilled labour -- was catered for in the postwar period essentially by the changeover of generations. Thus, for 20 to 30 years, young people leaving the education system with higher qualifications had access not only to jobs of a corresponding level left vacant by their elders taking retirement but at the same time were also being offered most of the newly created jobs of a similarly high level; a comparison of the generations reveals that almost everywhere the age groups entering the job market since the mid-sixties not only are are much more highly trained and educated than their elders but also hold, on average, many more high-level jobs than the older element of the working population.

In France, a country in which the level of the qualification has traditionally been of great importance, this trend, which developed very rapidly after the Second World War, was especially marked. Even in the sixties, observers had noted that, as a result of the expansion of education, university qualifications, formerly a more than sufficient condition for obtaining a good post (in particular, in senior management and the professions), had become an essential prerequisite: it no longer sufficed to have successfully completed a course of higher education to be granted immediate or rapid access to a high position, and for those without a university qualification such positions were virtually out of reach. Similarly, in France (perhaps more than in any other European country), the level of education attained had long been a decisive classification criterion in collective agreements in business and industry.
d) The education system is increasingly exposed to pressing demands and expectations on the part of the various sectors of society

Over the last few decades, the education system -- which, even in the early postwar years, used to offer the great majority of a particular age group only an initiation (variously appreciated or tolerated) into the elements of modern civilisation while (if one leaves aside the small minority of children from the urbanised middle classes) the real issues of social and professional success or failure were being decided elsewhere -- has become a key function of any modern society. Naturally, this new function has also given rise to increasingly pressing demands and expectations directed at education by the various sections of society.

These demands and expectations are extremely varied and often fundamentally contradictory. Thus, an increasing proportion, and for a long time almost everywhere a majority, of the population expects success at school and university to open the door for their children to a good job and a rewarding career. For their part, the employers insist, sometimes -- depending on the moment and the country -- very strongly, that the education system should ensure that the training is closely adapted to the job and should so channel the student flow that it conforms as closely as possible to the requirements of the labour market (of which they often take a very short-term view).

At the same time, powerful interest groups, guided by a logic whose profoundly corporatist nature is often only thinly disguised by concern for the public good, endeavour to protect the income and social status of certain professions by strictly controlling the educational avenues of approach. Local authorities and local and regional policy-makers try to use the creation or expansion of schools and especially institutions of higher education as a lever of economic development. For the past ten years at least, increasing budgetary constraints have been placing the authorities under ever greater pressure to restrict expenditure on education and keep a closer watch on its effectiveness.

Because of the high degree of centralism, the extreme visibility of the advantages previously linked with good academic qualifications and the traditionally high level of politicisation of the education issue, the French education system is especially exposed to such external influences and pressures. Thus, a recent report of the Commissariat Général du Plan (Planning Agency) poses the question: "What other issue is capable of mobilising the crowds and bringing adolescents or even adults out onto the street in their hundreds of thousands?"5

3. New problems and new challenges

This unprecedented position of the education system within society has led to the emergence of equally unprecedented problems and challenges. For several decades, education policy was dominated by the great reformist debate which revolved essentially around the question: "How rapidly should the modernisation of education proceed and what concrete form should it take?" It is now, with increasing urgency, being called upon to confront these new problems and challenges. However, although in public debate reference is still made to the great objectives of reform, the true focus of education policy is gradually shifting towards the vital need to manage effectively the huge apparatus which the education system has everywhere become, to control the increasingly obvious tensions and conflicts between external and internal objectives, and to locate and progressively arrive at points or directions of lasting equilibrium in the internal functioning of the system and in its relations with its social and economic environment.
a) *The three problems selected*

In planning their approach, the authors of this report decided to concentrate on three problems, each of which forms the subject of a separate chapter:

-- How to avoid the risk of a minority being excluded by underachievement? (Chapter II)

-- How to ensure the quality and consistency of education in a system characterised by increasing diversity? (Chapter III)

-- How to harmonize the trends in education and employment? (Chapter IV)

This decision was taken in the light of several criteria which deserve some explanation.

The first criterion was suggested by the French government’s desire to have the OECD experts’ mission structured around the notion of equality of opportunity. From the outset, the OECD and the examiners accepted this option, as the question of equality of opportunity provided an excellent peg on which to hang the review. Indeed, equality of opportunity (in and through the education system) is a fundamental prerequisite both for social integration and cohesion and for the effective functioning of the mechanisms of human resource allocation and stimulation of change in the national economy.

It is immediately apparent that the first two problems, to be dealt with in Chapters II and III, meet this criterion. But the same also applies to the third problem (Chapter IV), namely the harmonization of training and employment, since the proper use of such an approach presupposes that the questions posed and the thinking they provoke:

-- go beyond the mere internal functioning of the education system;

-- take into account the possible interaction between that system, on the one hand, and employment structures (and the policies of the employers who shape them), on the other;

-- systematically treat the education system no longer as a "supplier", or indeed "sub-contractor", of the national economy, but rather as a potent "fashioner" of the employment structure.

Other criteria follow from the way in which the authors, as already explained in the introduction to the report, have defined their mission:

-- On the one hand, the issues to be examined should not consist exclusively of the problems generated by the French education system and the challenges that French education policy must meet, but should be common to all modern industrial countries, though perhaps encountered in a variety of specific forms.

-- On the other hand, special attention should be paid to all the problems to which France has recently endeavoured to respond by introducing major educational innovations. This is clearly the case as far as the three selected problems are concerned: educational priority areas (Chapter II), the recent creation of university institutes offering unified training for teachers
in schools, colleges and lycées (Chapter III) and the increase in the number of vocational training courses at intermediate level (Chapter IV).

A final criterion to note is the specific competence of the examiners: as so little time was available, the examiners were forced to concentrate on topics on which at least one member of the group was an authority.

b) Some problems excluded from consideration

This concentration on a number of specific problems and challenges, though clearly unavoidable, necessarily meant excluding other questions and facts which, in some respects, might be considered equally or even more important. It will suffice to mention three.

Higher education

First of all, there is the question of higher education which, in almost every European industrial country, is currently in a state of flux with as yet no hint as to what structures, what functions, what scale and what mode of operation of higher education institutions would make it possible to establish and maintain equilibrium in the long term. Is there a maximum percentage of any given age group capable of entering and successfully completing higher education? What internal differentiation of higher education -- for example, into courses of study with a lesser or greater scientific or practical emphasis or of longer or shorter duration, or into institutions with varying degrees of selectivity -- should be contemplated or perhaps avoided, if there is to be no risk of serious unintended consequences? What is the true potential for reform and/or improved efficiency in higher education, in the face of the hierarchies of income and statutes in the employment structure which continue extensively to favour qualifications awarded by universities and the grandes écoles over all other channels of education? What should be the place of research, which society is going to have need of more than ever, in universities attended by almost half a given age group, as is likely to be the case in France? We consider that the conclusions of the analysis carried out by the OECD in 1986 in connection with the review of technological innovation policy in France still offer food for thought concerning the future of this key level of education.

The financing of education

Very closely linked, though not strictly limited, to the problem of the structure of higher education is the question of the financing of education, which needs to be examined from at least three points of view. Firstly, the debate is currently dominated by the structural constraints on public budgets which today, almost everywhere, finance the bulk of expenditure on education, and by the eagerness of exchequers to mobilise complementary or even alternative private funding. Moreover, the question of the management effects linked with a certain type of financing is now being raised with increasing insistence. In particular, there is a growing chorus of voices claiming that a radical transformation of the funding and financial management of educational institutions could make the behaviour of all involved much more rational and responsible and considerably improve the efficiency of the whole education system. Finally, the reform of the financing of educational expenditure is quite often regarded as an appropriate means of more closely
involving other partners -- and particularly the future employers of young trainees -- in the management of certain parts of the education system.

The internal articulation of the education system

A third problem, which the authors have not been able to examine in detail but which is too important to be left out completely, concerns the internal articulation of the education system. If the young -- as is now already the case in France for most of a given age group -- are to spend at least twelve to fifteen years in educational institutions, then we must urgently address the question of the optimum pattern for the time spent in each stage and the organisation of the transition between the main stages and between the different institutions concerned. The French system is divided into four main stages, each entrusted to a particular type of institution with its own specific structure, size, staff and pedagogical culture, and still clearly bears the stamp of a long history prior to the major reforms of the postwar period. It might be asked whether, in particular, the transition from primary school to college and from college to lycée (general or technological) does not involve, at least in the case of pupils in some degree of difficulty, too violent a break in the style of education and training and in the learning environment to be consistent with the broad objectives accepted by all.

c) A fundamental problem: the strategic management capacity of the education system

It was while working on the three priority problems, but also while reflecting on the challenges excluded by this particular choice, that the authors realised the importance of a fourth problem of a transversal or, if you prefer, systemic nature, to which the final chapter (Chapter V) has been devoted:

-- How to strengthen the innovative and strategic management potential of the education system?

During the period dominated by the reform and expansion of its education system, every industrial country developed -- generally on the basis of long-standing cultural and institutional traditions -- forms of educational administration and management, analytical tools and planning, decision-making and evaluation techniques which, under the special conditions of this limited period, functioned reasonably well. But who can say with any certainty that they will prove adequate for innovation and strategic management of the education system now that it is no longer a question of introducing specific reforms but of ensuring, in an environment likely to become increasingly turbulent, both long-term stability and a sufficient degree of adaptability of the educational institutions and processes?

The authors’ reflections, judgements and queries with regard to this fourth problem constitute, in many respects, the core and quintessence of the report as a whole. Clearly, these can be no more than provisional and incomplete. Their primary function could and should be to trigger off among those responsible for education in France and the other countries of the OECD a debate which would look beyond the familiar landmarks to explore what could and should be the characteristic features of a modern and efficient education system in the 21st century, what immediate steps should be taken to pave the way towards the future, what are the unresolved questions to which scientific research and/or practical experimentation should seek an answer, and what is their degree of urgency.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


2. Ibid., p. 20.

3. Ibid., p. 21.


II. HOW TO PREVENT EXCLUSION THROUGH UNDERACHIEVEMENT?  
THE CASE OF THE EDUCATIONAL PRIORITY AREAS

1. Is the marginalisation of minorities unavoidable?

Among the new problems that are emerging as the new characteristics of the education systems born of the major reforms of the sixties and seventies (described in the previous chapter) become more entrenched, the problem of marginalisation as a result of underachievement is certainly one of those causing the most concern. Almost automatically, the attainment of the main objectives of the reforms, in particular the broadening of access to secondary and higher education to children of every origin and background and the dominant part that education is now playing in the distribution of opportunities and social status, is being everywhere accompanied by the emergence of a minority of children who, having failed at school, enter upon their working life with a serious handicap.

For some time, it was possible to view this problem as an essentially transitory concern. It seemed obvious that the most gifted children would be the first to profit from the new educational structures whose benefits would only gradually trickle down to the rest. Moreover, it was obvious that a small percentage of children -- with varying degrees of mental or motor disability -- was incapable of following the courses intended for the so-called "normal" child.

Since then, however, the great majority of developed countries have been compelled to recognise two facts:

1. Despite major innovations in teaching and learning techniques, the problem of underachievement persists. It is becoming increasingly unlikely that this is, basically, no more than a temporary phenomenon; in fact, it often seems as if the gap between the students struggling to keep abreast and the bulk of the school population just keeps on widening.

2. It is becoming more and more apparent that underachievement is not just a consequence of the circumstances of the individual, with its origin in clearly defined physical or mental handicaps, but also very largely a social phenomenon. Almost everywhere, its victims are children from backgrounds that combine a number of characteristics such as: a large, quite often single-parent family; a poorly educated father and/or mother with an unskilled, low-grade job; relatively insecure accommodation in either a very remote (outer suburbs) or run-down district; and, more recently, immigrant parents, particularly from non-European countries. In short, socioeconomic exclusion as a result of underachievement seems to be concentrated among children from certain social and/or ethnic backgrounds whose culture is often foreign to or indeed incompatible with the educational environment and the culture it purveys.
As a social phenomenon, underachievement presents educators with a real challenge. It blatantly gives the lie to the optimism of the reformers with regard to the powers of acculturation and social integration of a more unified system of education. It casts doubt on the soundness of most of the pedagogical theories fashionable since the end of the war, theories which gave rise to a whole series of educational principles, methods and practices intended precisely to overcome, from the earliest days of school, the handicaps which might result from a background giving only poor access to educational facilities and by traditional alien to the culture of the school. Far from enabling all young people to enter upon their working lives as well equipped, culturally and vocationally, as their moral values and intellectual capacities allow, modern-day schools appear to be producing a whole group of people -- admittedly a minority, but nevertheless too numerous to be lightly dismissed -- permanently disadvantaged and with handicaps they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

In most industrialised countries, over the last twenty years the problem of the marginalisation of an entire section of the younger generation through underachievement and its social consequences, such as the upsurge of violence and juvenile delinquency, has grown worse under the combined influence of two factors. On the one hand, the persistent and increasingly dramatic deterioration of the labour market and falling levels of employment have had a severe impact on those young people who have been scarred by their inability to master a minimum of basic knowledge and often traumatised by the experience of having failed at school. Unemployment, often long-term, alternating with insecure low-paid jobs, demanding little in the way of skills, is frequently all that the young drop-out can look forward to in terms of a "career". On the other hand, these marginalisation syndromes may be further aggravated when combined with migration-related factors. Very often, the deterioration in the job market has been paralleled, almost everywhere, by a sharp increase in the entry of members of immigrants’ families (in contrast to the previous inflows of young, unmarried migrants). The phenomena of exclusion have been all the more visible as a result of these people being mainly concentrated in the inner cities or suburbs.

Aware of the persistence and seriousness of the problem, all the countries concerned are now seeking solutions. However, all the policies proposed and all the measures taken raise questions to which it is hard to give a clear (and politically acceptable) reply. Can head-start programmes, regarded as one of the best remedies for a poor family background, overcome the tendency to reject the culture purveyed by the schools? How can the principle of equality of treatment be reconciled with the practice of positive discrimination which appears to be necessary to mitigate certain negative effects of the social background? Is the cultural model on which, in every modern country, schooling is ultimately based really the best means of combining effective acculturation and the moulding of a stable personal identity in young people from a wide variety of backgrounds? Should not an effort be made to break away from the narrow confines of education policy and school organisation in order to find a lasting cure for underachievement and attack it at its source, i.e. in the living, housing and working conditions of an entire social group?

2. The situation and the French response

As shown by the previous review, for a very long time underachievement has been a permanent feature of the functioning of the education system in France. It reflects the traditional characteristics of the system within French society. Despite a number of remarkable features characterising the history of the French school, the phenomenon has persisted and assumed even greater importance insofar as the French economy has been badly hit by unemployment, especially among the young. For certain groups of students, failure at school degenerates rapidly into social failure or even marginalisation. To correct this situation,
at the start of the last decade the French authorities, breaking with a certain philosophy which had hitherto underpinned the administration of the education system, established in those places worst affected what were termed educational priority areas, the scope and limitations of which in relation to the problems to be solved we shall endeavour to describe below.

a) Some of the features of the French system that tend to make matters worse

The importance accorded to education since the Revolution can be attributed to the traditionally meritocratic nature of French society. The education system is supposed to confer on individuals, whatever their origin, specific and nationally recognised qualifications enabling them to take their place in society as a citizen and producer. As in other countries, the variety of the tasks to be performed and the perception of their social value have inevitably led to an hierarchisation of the qualifications giving access to the corresponding positions. Hence the importance attached to the idea of equal opportunity of access to education, so that every future citizen can participate on equal terms in the competition in which he must necessarily engage. In fact, inasmuch as there is only a limited number of top positions and -- although this does not always amount to the same thing -- of places in the professions considered at a particular point in time, to be the most attractive, the education system resembles a "fractional distillation" process in which direct or indirect selection mechanisms play a very important role.

It must be acknowledged that for more than half the twentieth century this system was able to function and gain the acceptance of the various social groups which historically, as indicated in Chapter I, had used types of education adapted to their culture and ambitions. The relative rigidity of the system was compensated, especially before the great postwar reforms, by the admittedly restricted possibilities offered by types of education or "bridging institutions" providing for "the advancement of the ablest" to high positions in society, albeit in a limited number of sectors.

However, some of the characteristics of the system, described in more detail in the next chapter, such as its abstraction and the notorious lack of individualisation of its teaching and learning strategies, inevitably led to the development of an underachievement syndrome following the advent of the phase of explosive expansion and mass admission to levels of education previously protected because patronised by the children of the social elite. "More of the same" could only aggravate the situation inasmuch as neither the content and methods of teaching nor the criteria for validating attainments had really changed. When important structural reforms modified the configuration of an entity which had up to then been relatively compartmentalised and thus introduced more flexibility into the potential school careers of the pupils, the latter -- and not only those from the most disadvantaged social groups -- suffered the consequences of inadequate adaptation and implementation of the curricula. In fact, the relative democratisation of access to the higher levels of education and mass admission resulted in an influx of students from backgrounds less "educogenic" than before, such as the new groups of migrants who had arrived some 15 years earlier. All in all, as a result of changes in the circumstances, the underachievement syndrome is spreading and calling into question the very effectiveness of the system as a whole.

Underachievement during compulsory schooling mainly takes the form of grade-repeating, which implies a cumulative retardation relative to the theoretical age of termination of the cycle or level of education. At the same time, the age of the pupil still plays a big part in determining what choices are open to him at the end of this period of schooling. There is often a tendency to make "negative choices" in favour of so-called "short" vocational courses, where there is nonetheless still a high failure rate due to
a lack of knowledge and general basic education. This explains why in 1992 there was still a significant number of young people leaving the initial education system without formal qualifications. In a period of expanding employment, these young men and women were able, in one way or another, to find a niche in society. Over the last 15 years, restructuring and economic crises, combined with the increase in the number of job-seekers, have reduced the demand for unskilled or semi-skilled labour and kept youth unemployment at high levels. As might be expected, both the jobs crisis and the fact that it is now more difficult to find uses for young people with the lowest qualifications have exacerbated the problem, especially in the most disadvantaged urban areas. The concentration of the underprivileged in particular localities has resulted in the mutual reinforcement of handicaps, and in these problem areas the percentage of pupils leaving the school system without genuine vocational qualifications is at least twice the national average.

Ambitious though it may seem, the objective of bringing 80 per cent of children up to baccalauréat level could place in jeopardy the very future of the other 20 per cent. Is there not a risk that the system, which in general has adapted itself reasonably well to the needs of the "middling" and "brighter" pupils, will remain, as it still was in the recent past, relatively powerless to assist the significant minority of pupils in difficulty? Is there not a risk of "stigmatising" this group, whatever the relative success of compensatory and/or additional measures centred on the acquisition of short-course vocational training qualifications as a result of transfer, possibly more direct but in fact at an earlier age than official policy recommends, to vocational lycées, apprenticeship schemes or training schemes, generally organised by the Ministry of Labour on the basis of alternating classroom/workplace instruction?

The run-down state of some neighbourhoods, which affects the conditions and indeed the very atmosphere prevailing in the so-called "sensitive" schools, as well as some of the inhabitants, means that the school, in conjunction of course with other institutions, is called upon to provide a genuine alternative living space, in order that the support given to pupils in difficulty may be meaningful. With very few exceptions, the French school is not run on these lines. It is essentially a place for the acquisition of knowledge. Even though the pupil may spend more time there than elsewhere, there has always existed, until recently, a latent hostility on the part of the institution to excessive social interference and thus to the necessary opening up of the school to the establishment of specific partnerships to assist it in performing its task.

b) The advantages of the French system

Is this to say that the French education system is necessarily condemned to "live" with a high failure rate at each stage of the education process (grade-repeating and relegation during compulsory schooling to streams considered less prestigious; serial transfers, dropping out and departure without qualifications during non-compulsory schooling)? Do not some of its methods of operation tend to promote greater equality of opportunity and ought they not to favour scholastic success? Has no attempt been made to solve these problems?
A favourable operating framework:

For one thing, the level of nursery school attendance is the highest in the world and it is acknowledged that the subtle blend of enrolling the very young and an educational approach based, in particular, on the acquisition of communication skills and basic knowledge tends to improve the children’s subsequent learning ability. The case-study quoted in the Background Report confirms the results of American studies on the positive impact of accepting children from the age of two in terms of the prevention of subsequent underachievement, but nevertheless points out that this effect seems to have faded by the beginning of lower-secondary education. It should be added that the common training and status of nursery and primary school staff may also favour the uninterrupted progress of the youngest through their early schooling.

Secondly, French society has a long tradition of assimilating social groups whose prospects as regards their social integration and, more particularly, their acculturation via the education system had initially seemed fairly bleak. Moreover, throughout this century France has been a land of immigration. Thus, both the primary and the secondary sectors of the economy have welcomed foreign workers who have gone on to settle permanently in the country. It is acknowledged that the schools have made a considerable contribution to the social integration of these groups, whatever the particular vicissitudes to which, in the course of events, some of them have been exposed. In this connection, it is important to stress the role played not only by the nursery schools, as described above, but also by the primary schools where teachers such as Freinet and innovative teacher groups, often going against their supervisory authorities, have done much to adapt teaching methods, while nevertheless adhering to the final goal of imparting knowledge, this being seen as a major factor in social integration.

Thirdly and lastly, the policy from the outset of strict centralisation of the management of the education system has historically made it easier to implement concrete measures to promote the officially proclaimed principle of equality of opportunity. Despite the inevitable inequalities in some of the means available to schools, depending on their location, the role of central government in the management of the system has prevented various local shortcomings from allowing excessive inequalities to build up, at least during the period of basic education, long considered indispensable to the acquisition of true citizenship. Moreover, as the Background Report indicates, the policy followed for the last ten years or more has tended to reduce regional disparities in the supply of education.

Attempts at a solution

It would be unfair not to mention the efforts made by the authorities to tackle the problem of underachievement since the publication of the last review. Over the years, these attempts have taken various forms and have affected the different levels and types of school in varying degrees. As pointed out in the Background Report, although the factors responsible for repeating are still not perfectly understood, particularly in the light of the persistence of learning difficulties due to inadequate mastery of certain basic subjects at college entry, in primary schools the phenomenon has been on the decline.

In fact, attempts have been made to ensure better co-ordination between pre-primary and primary education and between the latter and the college (meetings between teachers, opportunities for the pupils to visit their future school and class, etc.). The curricula for the compulsory period of education were revised in the mid-eighties. At the end of the eighties, greater flexibility was introduced into the curriculum.
to improve the ability of the slowest to assimilate the basic skills. This took the form of cycles covering the final years of nursery school and the primary years. At both primary school and college, pupils who are slow learners and/or in difficulty are now allowed to take an extra year to complete the cycles in question.

Inasmuch as college is regarded as the "weak link" in the system, where all the problems, indeed contradictions, generated by the system itself converge, numerous attempts have been made to offer more effective schooling to the pupils in greatest difficulty, especially where mixed-ability classes have become the norm and these pupils were not considered to have a sufficient mastery of the basic knowledge needed to continue their studies. The outcome was a whole series of various types of adjustment, transitional and remedial classes, some of which provided an opportunity for a more detailed analysis of the problems and possible solutions. The main approach used involved steering most of these pupils sooner than others towards short vocational training courses either in the vocational lycées or within the framework of an apprenticeship scheme. Since, in particular, those who had opted for an apprenticeship scheme tended to achieve integration more easily than the others, it seems that these pupils were relatively more successful in overcoming their initial educational difficulties. In this connection, it should be pointed out that the vocational lycées had succeeded in developing an intake procedure well suited to pupils leaving college one or two years before completing the normal study cycle. The authorities then went on to develop more systematically the teaching of technology in the colleges, even making it a specialised option covering the last two years of college. Not surprisingly, this option is primarily aimed at motivating and keeping at college, so that they may continue to acquire a sound general education (including in "general technology"), those pupils more at ease pursuing a study programme that does not consist only of general subjects. A secondary aim, at the time of the introduction of the vocational baccalauréats, was to have the vocational lycées concentrate solely on the training of pupils who had completed the full initial college course. Admittedly, the abandonment of the earlier catching-up system may have given these lycées the chance to regain a certain prestige alongside the general and technical lycées, but one can only regret that some pupils who benefited from the system are no longer able to do so.

Alongside these semi-structural measures, which mainly concerned compulsory schooling, there have recently been moves to reform upper-secondary education. The basic idea is, on the one hand, to provide, from the first year of the cycle, a genuine training in working methods, in particular by varying the size of the group or class, and, on the other hand, to reduce the importance of mathematics in the selection process. This involved making changes in the content and weightings of certain disciplines both during the cycle and for the final baccalauréat exam.

In addition, on the basis of an analysis of the well-established causes of underachievement, various local bodies, i.e. the schools themselves, the local authorities, groups of specialists, etc., in collaboration with parents and various socio-cultural associations, including ethnic associations wherever there are high concentrations of children from immigrant families, have taken more specific and more precisely targeted measures to support children in difficulty. One might mention, for example, help with homework and revision, assistance with reading, with improving comprehension and the use of the French language, etc. To this list there should be added the highly localised, but broader and more ambitious campaigns against social exclusion, which may, of course, include an educational programme aimed at adults as well as the young. Finally, there are the skill-building and/or reskilling programmes for the young arranged in a number of cases with the aid of the educational institutions but generally run by the Ministry of Labour or various local bodies. One such programme, undertaken to meet a concern shared by a number of OECD countries, is that devoted to the identification of "new skills" that can be acquired by initially fairly
unskilled youngsters. As with the other experiments mentioned above, one result has been a broadening
of our basic understanding of the way youngsters acquire knowledge, which is of particular value as far
as the running of alternating classroom/workplace training schemes is concerned.

c) The development of educational priority areas

Despite the relatively favourable environment and the initiatives -- by no means exhaustive --
listed above, the French education system has not really found any permanent solution to the problems
posed by the dysfunctions due to the cumulative effects of underachievement. As in other countries facing
the same problems, solutions such as earlier enrolment in vocational education, either received wholly at
school or alternating with periods of on-the-job training, or catch-up courses and/or a transition to
employment under various conditions, very often under the aegis of an agency basically responsible for
adult training or retraining, though they may have benefited some pupils, have nevertheless revealed their
limitations, being complicated, unreliable in terms of their results and expensive due to a trial-and-error
approach and the succession of different schemes. The examiners are aware of how difficult it may be to
solve a problem common to many OECD countries. However, considering that in France underachievement
is not exclusively a characteristic of children from underprivileged backgrounds, they are surprised that the
above-mentioned succession of innovations and experiments over so many years has failed to lead to any
radical reformulation of the content and methods of teaching in the schools and special skills training
sessions designed to ensure a relatively smooth transition to working life. It seems to them that basic
education, which corresponds more or less to the period of compulsory schooling, has not really been
treated as an entity in itself corresponding to a limited number of clearly defined and duly and regularly
reappraised objectives. In this context, it would appear that the well-established and acknowledged
complexity of the process of setting up a comprehensive type of college (collège unique) has somewhat
obscured the reforms of the content and method of the first stage of compulsory education, i.e. the primary
school. The examiners conclude that the innovations centred mainly on "problem" pupils both at college
entry and beyond, some of which have been far from ineffective (such as early streaming into pre-
vocational and vocational training), have actually been used by various partners as a device for staving off
longer-term reform, which would inevitably be more complex, more far-reaching and more pertinent to the
problems posed. Accordingly, the examiners will return to this question in Chapter V and hope that the
debate on the future of the French education system initiated in January 1994 will make it possible to
clarify what measures are needed to meet the challenges identified above.

However, the early eighties saw the start of a serious effort to identify the localities where, as a
result of an accumulation of socio-cultural handicaps, the majority of pupils were underachieving or in
danger of underachieving. Thus, in 1982, the authorities decided to mark out certain "educational priority
areas" (zones d’éducation prioritaires -- ZEPs) and to waive the principle of a formally egalitarian
distribution of the resources allocated to schools. The authorities had become increasingly convinced that
a genuine policy of equality of opportunity could succeed only when coupled with an unequal distribution
of resources in favour of those in greatest difficulty. Although such a policy demands continuity and
consistency, the period from 1982 to 1989 was characterised by misgivings, hesitation and finally a loss
of momentum which made it impossible to fulfil the -- perhaps excessive -- hopes placed in this important
innovation. The fresh start made in 1990, based on a better understanding of the concepts, criteria and
means of development, put the ZEPs back on track.
Apart from the unequal distribution of resources, what are the principal characteristics of the ZEPs and how do they work? The first thing to note is that, in terms of quality and quantity, the education provided may not be different from that provided elsewhere. The national goals still apply and there can be no question of a merely "behavioural" approach. The innovation resides in the authorisation of different educational approaches, in terms of both methods and the required duration of the learning period. However, in order to guarantee equal chances of access to higher levels of education, the players are urged to avoid any indirect reconstruction of hierarchical and segregative streaming which the adaptation of the curricula and methods itself might induce. At the same time, the authorities endeavour to maintain and develop the options and the cycles and levels regarded as the most prestigious within the education system.

A second characteristic of the ZEPs is the recognition of the need to provide psychological and socio-cultural support, both initially and throughout the period of schooling, as the necessary foundation for effective learning and progressive social integration or reintegration.

Thirdly, the policy calls for the personalised and co-ordinated support not only of the teachers but also of various specialists (psychologists, socio-cultural workers, the medical or paramedical professions) and various public services (courts, police) who may be called upon to take concerted action on behalf of the pupils and the schools concerned. A special effort needs to be made to get the parents to understand what the school has to offer and to encourage them to support their children, among other things by themselves taking advantage of the opportunities for adult education.

Fourthly, drawing closer to the community and its human and material resources means that the work of a ZEP needs to be closely linked with that of the broader structures covering either the whole of the district concerned or an entire city and similarly engaged in supporting and promoting measures designed to rehabilitate the area in question and enable it to catch up with the wider environment of which it forms part. What this also means is that, at national level, for such joint action to be effective, the various ministries concerned have to co-operate effectively and, insofar as 80 per cent of the ZEPs are located in urban areas, that all these activities should be integrated as closely as possible within the framework of a new urban policy.

Fifthly and lastly, the complexity of the tasks to be performed and the objectives to be achieved has led to the drawing up of concrete development plans for the areas in question and to stress being laid on the importance of the logical interlining of individual projects, existing school projects and the area plan itself, which is managed and monitored by a multidisciplinary team representing the parties concerned.

3. Strengths and weaknesses of the educational priority areas

The examiners readily acknowledge that the implementation of an innovation that cuts across the tradition of strategic administrative management of the French school system could not produce all the anticipated outcomes immediately. Moreover, although the ZEP experiment has already demonstrated some strengths, they feel obliged to point out that, in parallel with this major innovation, other more specific measures have been taken either in so-called "sensitive" schools not incorporated in a ZEP or to meet certain more or less similar needs in schools that do not fall directly into either of these two categories. With regard to both the ZEPs and these other measures, close monitoring of the results from the outset might have helped the various partners to adjust course in order to meet the objectives of the changes introduced. However, the novelty of the approach and the weakness of the evaluation culture, that
is a common feature of the educational sectors in most developed countries, have tended to delay the
drawing up of an initial balance sheet based on a predictive and formative as well as recapitulative
evaluation. The few surveys, appraisals and opinions available rely upon different methodologies and it
is sometimes difficult to reconcile the results in order to present the strengths and weaknesses of these new
strategies in all their various aspects. Nevertheless, the examiners believe that, as in the case of the
university teacher training institutes analysed in the next chapter, there exists in the ZEPs a potential for
progress, currently more at the level of a limited experiment than broad practical application.

a) The positive aspects of the experiment

The examiners consider that emphasis should be placed at the outset on a finding they have had
repeatedly confirmed, namely that the school has sometimes been the last and only important public service
to remain in a disadvantaged urban area. Insofar as a large-scale programme on behalf of the population
concerned necessarily implied the opening up of the school to its environment together with the
indispensable collaboration of other bodies, the policy of educational priority areas presupposed the parallel
development of other initiatives intended, in the majority of cases, to restore the urban fabric and, in the
remainder, the rural environment. As regards, more particularly, the urban areas, it was only towards the
end of the eighties that a more systematic urban and neighbourhood social development policy was devised
in order to facilitate the co-ordination of the various measures being taken.

Thus, we have witnessed the development of more coherent policies involving, in addition to the
ministries of education and urban affairs, the ministries responsible for employment, social affairs, justice
and the interior and even the ministry of defence which has made conscripts available to perform specific
tasks. Common planning, implementation, support and monitoring structures have been set up and the
previous piecemeal practices cut back. Within this context, as well as more informally at local level, the
various players have got to know each other better and to co-ordinate their activities for the sake of greater
efficiency. Taking into account the difficulty and complexity of the various problems to be solved, very
specific and highly adaptable support measures -- the only type capable of enabling an effective policy to
be applied -- have been devised to assist the schools and their teaching staffs. Once the school principals
have found suitable solutions, the social workers, lawyers, judges, etc., operating through networks, are able
to provide assistance as and when needed. Whenever it was considered that pupils in difficulty might
benefit from a programme of alternating classroom and workplace training, partnerships have been formed
with businesses and specialised associations. Partnerships between schools and the various local authorities
have also sprung up, without the strict demarcation between their respective responsibilities being allowed
to prevent them from implementing joint and concerted measures (for example, assistance with reading and
homework, etc. and support for participation in socio-cultural and sports activities). Links have been
forged with parents through local associations, including ethnic, language and multicultural groups.

School and area plans, which, given that they cover a period of at least three years, justify a
sustained in-depth approach, have made possible the implementation of pedagogical innovations such as
specially adapted time-tables and classes involving the presence of an educational psychologist, reduction
of the number of pupils per class and per group, remedial modules or classes, ability grouping in the basic
disciplines and the testing of new teaching and learning methods in certain disciplines, the extension of
instructional cycles, etc. Of course, education or re-education in the basic social rules could be added to
this non-exhaustive list. Altogether, whatever the final outcome of these various measures, they have, in
general, demonstrated the need for the school to open itself up to its environment in order to be more
effective, without thereby necessarily "losing its soul" provided that it adheres firmly to its mission of imparting knowledge of various kinds, including social knowledge.

Concretely, as indicated by the Background Report and the specific assessments made by the Direction de l’évaluation et de la prospective (DEP -- Evaluation and Planning Directorate), there has been no fall-off in the scholastic performances reported by the schools located in ZEPs, despite the fact that since 1982 the socio-economic conditions prevailing in those areas have further deteriorated. This is naturally due to the measures of positive discrimination, which have made it possible to target a number of actions more specifically to schools located in ZEPs and generally to maintain, under unusually difficult conditions necessitating compensatory measures, a more or less equivalent level of resources. To this, of course, there should be added, without it being possible to distinguish their individual effects, the more qualitative measures mentioned above, whose impact can be seen in the form of a number of slightly more favourable indicators such as:

i) the pupil/teacher ratio in the primary schools, which was 21.67 in the ZEPs as compared with 21.87 for all the pupils at that level;

ii) the rate of school attendance at three years of age which was 36.88 in the ZEPs as compared with 34.11 for the country as a whole.

b) The weaknesses of the experiment

The examiners were not surprised by many of the positive outcomes mentioned above. After all, it was to be expected that the provision of additional resources would enable the schools in the ZEPs:

i) to come out somewhere near the national average with regard to the resources available;

ii) to see no further widening of the gap between their initial academic results the national average.

However, the real problem would appear to be the difficulty of "catching up with the pack", that is to say gradually closing the long-standing gap relative to the various national averages. For example, there are significant differences of performance in the basic subjects (French, mathematics) even in primary school, where the number of pupils repeating two grades or more is twice as great in the ZEPs as elsewhere.

Despite all the advantages of early nursery school enrolment as a means of preparing for primary school, and even though the enrolment rate for three-year-olds in the ZEPs is above the national average, it nevertheless appears that only one academy has made a real attempt at positive discrimination with a view to raising this figure still further. The examiners consider that, in primary education in particular (an indispensable basis for subsequent schooling), the methods for assisting or supporting pupils who are experiencing great difficulty remain relatively traditional and unimaginative. Contrary to what is happening in other countries, pupils with the same handicaps tend to be grouped together in one class, instead of having the advantage of specifically targeted assistance as members of far more mixed classes, involving their occasional and temporary withdrawal, as necessary -- a procedure which generally leads to an improvement in the performance of these less able pupils. Since a systematic evaluation of the ZEPs has been relatively slow in coming and since there are still difficulties with the acceptance of its necessarily
multidimensional approach, we cannot be certain that all the measures taken in the ZEPs have been targeted accurately and in the right order of priority, which clearly must depend on the context. For example, the central inspectorate has pointed out that the persistence of individual working methods among the teachers is impeding the development of teamwork, while the differentiation of instruction according to pupils’ abilities and learning pace is not proving easy to introduce.

In this context, we are thinking more particularly of the fundamental pedagogical innovations and evaluation, the development of links with the local community and especially parents, the recognition that the multicultural context can be a source of enrichment, in particular as regards the revamping of curricula, and of a significant increase in the number of children able to benefit from enrolment as early as possible in pre-primary education. Both the performance as well as the procedures and mechanisms put in place should be assessed, and both the authorities and the other actors involved should be able, through various networks and carefully prepared meetings, to discuss "what works and what doesn’t". Considering that, as pointed out above, not all the "sensitive schools" are included in the ZEPs, it is essential that the results be disseminated outside the ZEPs themselves. In this connection, the examiners find it surprising that the special "observatory" for these "sensitive schools" should recently have been abolished, when a number of lessons could have been gathered in this way for the ZEPs and for the purpose of devising specific measures for application in those schools.

Although the examiners can only approve the suggestion made in the Background Report concerning the adoption by the Ministry of Education of a genuine human resources development policy, they must point out that in precisely the area where its feasibility could have been demonstrated the idea has encountered numerous obstacles. For example, the early habit of assigning "novice" or inexperienced teachers and less qualified auxiliaries to work in the so-called "problem" schools, including those forming part of the ZEPs, has still not been eradicated. Thus the percentage of auxiliary teachers is higher in ZEP colleges (5.5 per cent) than in colleges in general (4.8 per cent). We were told that some schools inside the ZEPs, or outside but classed as "sensitive" or "problem schools", lack specialised staff because not enough posts of the educational psychologist, supervisor and social worker type have been created. Moreover, can we be sure that specific training is offered rapidly and on a priority basis to all the staff concerned?

Although we fully endorse the idea of recruiting the various categories of staff working in these schools on the basis of character and experience so that these schools function more efficiently, it appears that some of the social partners remain very much opposed to this method of recruitment which is still very unusual within the somewhat traditionalist context of the French civil service. For example, the examiners would have liked to have had some preliminary information on the school heads appointed on this basis at the start of the 1993/1994 academic year, in order to assess the nature and scope of this first exercise. Certainly we consider that the earlier decision to pay a special bonus to staff working under the difficult conditions that prevail in the ZEPs and to take these services into account in the context of their professional career is a step in the direction of a rational management of the human resources available to the national authorities. However, the fact that this measure is specific to the ZEPs, while the career advancement conditions for staff in general have remained unchanged, may have undesirable consequences. Persons who are more interested in immediate material benefits rather than deeply motivated by the challenges to be faced may apply for posts in ZEPs or "sensitive" schools where similar conditions apply. Can we be sure that the opinions of the rectors and inspectors on the candidacies will carry enough weight to prevent appointments from being accepted primarily in order to ensure that the vacant posts will in fact have been filled by the time school re-opens? Is there not also the risk of certain schools clinging to their
ZEPs status so as not to lose the material advantages that go with it, despite the fact that their progress might entitle them to rejoin the ranks of the "ordinary" schools? Here again, the lack of a national experimentation and innovation policy and a corresponding new set of terms and conditions of employment make it impossible to "hook up" the experience gained with the ZEP or "sensitive schools" to a broader whole. The present situation also has a potential for other undesirable effects, such as the reconstitution, to maintain the attractiveness of the sensitive schools, of homogeneous classes, possibly focusing on the more prestigious disciplines, alongside special classes for "problem" children. The examiners recognise that it is difficult to arrive at a neat formula in such circumstances for distributing pupils so as gradually to achieve optimum efficiency. That is why they consider pedagogical innovation and close monitoring to be indispensable.

In the last analysis, what appears to be most pregnant with consequences for underlying approach of the ZEP experiment is the very ambiguity of the criteria for deciding whether or not an school should be included in a ZEP. There are various constraints which result in some schools being excluded from a ZEP, although they should be in one in order to benefit from the various advantages, whereas others have or no longer have any reason to be included. For example, the DEP assessment indicates that only 62 per cent of the so-called "sensitive" colleges are included in a ZEP. A number of lycées also regarded as "sensitive" or "problem schools" are not in a ZEP, although they receive additional resources appropriate to the needs of their environment and their development. In fact, some local authorities which, as a result of decentralisation, are responsible for capital investment and non-personnel current expenditure, and some teams of teachers refuse inclusion in a ZEP for fear of being "labelled". Added to this, there is the relatively uniform nationwide distribution of ZEP resources, with more than three-quarters of the academies falling within one standard deviation from the mean percentage distribution of schools within ZEPs by academy. Except perhaps in the case of Paris, where 20 per cent of all schools are in ZEPs, the risk with the strategy which is being used is that of spreading the resources too thinly, and thereby preventing the additional funding from being heavily concentrated on well-targeted priority objectives.

The examiners consider that a serious re-evaluation of the criteria governing inclusion in a ZEP and the incorporation into an expanded scheme of all the schools that ought to receive similar aid would give the ZEPs an extra dimension and weight which might lead to a reconsideration of the present strategy with a view to incorporating it within a broader strategy of change and thus preventing the experiment from creating a possible "ghetto" effect. As we shall be mentioning later, from the pedagogical standpoint the ZEPs have a great potential which, if it were more thoroughly exploited, might finally give rise in France to a dynamic innovation policy. However, the difficulty of getting partners from a variety of administrative and professional backgrounds to work together should not be allowed to push the educationalists engaged in these experiments into narrowly centring their efforts on educational advances which, in reality, can be achieved only in close co-operation with outside partners. In fact, on numerous occasions the examiners have been informed of difficulties with the co-ordination -- and indeed necessary integration -- of certain activities at both national and local level.

It is a well-known fact that in a number of developed countries efforts to co-ordinate different ministries and their specialised agencies, with a view to implementing a more consistent policy, have not always led to the hoped-for results. Although the concept of "urban policy" and its corollary neighbourhood, social development, are relatively new in France, the examiners have the impression that a certain stagnation, of both thought and action, has recently set in, posing a threat to the necessary continuity of the measures already embarked upon and the motivation of the persons involved. These co-ordination difficulties -- felt all the more keenly by the education sector inasmuch as it has already
formulated clear objectives to be achieved -- can not only lead, as the Background Report points out, to resources being wasted but can also delay the signing of new urban development contracts and interrupt the flow of funds. The co-ordination of activities is further complicated by the proliferation of various initiatives which, at local level, concern different geographic areas, whereas schools and their problems have long been managed within a well defined system of administrative districts. Since each urban policy initiative may thus be based on a geographic breakdown different from that adopted by the Ministry of Education, a greater effort to clarify responsibilities with a view to achieving a limited number of clearly defined objectives might well result in each of the partners involved, and in particular the Ministry of Education, becoming more efficient. The examiners consider that it would be easier to make progress in this field if, at the same time, the criteria for including schools in ZEPs were to be improved and the grouping of experiments of a similar type as mentioned above were to be encouraged.

c) The potential of the educational priority areas

In the light of the discussion outlined above and looking beyond the current limitations of the ZEP experiment, the examiners consider that it has the potential of enabling the whole of the education system to adapt itself, so as more readily to achieve its particular goal of equalisation of opportunities. In their view, this potential exists at several operational levels, including that of the school itself and the more general level of the strategy for the reform of the entire education system and linking this with social development.

At the level of the school itself, a number of key functional elements have quickly emerged. Firstly, as regards the teaching staff, various aspects of their terms of service (training, recruitment, working conditions, remuneration, advancement, etc.) have been criticised and are being changed in ways, some of which are examined more closely in the next chapter, that have already been analysed by the OECD. The examiners consider that the ZEP experiment has highlighted the following aspects:

-- more or less full-time teaching to permit the assumption of a multiplicity of tasks: pedagogical, educational, socio-cultural, etc., within a time-table adapted to enable various learning activities and sequences to be accommodated in ways different from those in a traditional school;

-- alongside a qualitatively and quantitatively improved pupil/teacher ratio, the emergence of another pupil/adult ratio, these adults having, collectively and individually, a wider variety of tasks and necessarily working in co-operation, in particular in close-knit pedagogical and educational teams;

-- within the context of a redefinition of the teacher’s tasks and the precise role of specialists in meeting the specific needs of certain groups of pupils, the importance gradually being assumed by teachers’ auxiliaries who are now supplementing, in various ways and at various times (revision, assistance with homework, supervision, escort duties, etc.), the work of the teachers and enabling the latter to devote themselves to their essential and more demanding duties;

-- a systematisation of the contacts between the educational personnel working in the various levels and types of education through which the pupils pass during their school career;
-- a broadening of the management team to improve its ability to perform its multiple functions, for example, by incorporating the heads of departments or disciplinary and interdisciplinary teams, and an optimum distribution of tasks based on individual qualifications, experience and interests;

-- recruitment on the basis of character and experience of all those called upon to work in problem schools and the taking into account of all the duly authenticated training undertaken and work accomplished in this connection with regard to the promotion and career of those concerned;

-- among the functions likely to assume a certain importance -- if funds are really available -- the development of individual and collective action-oriented research as a means of enhancing the status of the teacher as a true professional and, as a corollary, membership of formal and informal networks of teaching teams and schools facing similar problems and thereby contributing to the advancement of basic knowledge in these areas.

Secondly, as regards teaching and learning strategies, the ZEP experiment:

-- calls into question the application of a relatively standard pedagogical model for the transmission of knowledge, this model already having been strongly criticised in connection with numerous previous experiments;

-- calls for, more than anything elsewhere or before, a reconsideration of how the multidimensional goals of education (development of the personality, citizenship training, acquisition of job qualifications, etc.) can be achieved by other combinations of courses and resources and in a less piecemeal form;

-- confirms the need, on the one hand, to ensure that a psycho-sociological basis favourable to learning exists or is sufficiently developed and, on the other, to maintain a progressivity in the learning process by making sure that the pupil has already assimilated the basic knowledge he will need before passing on to a higher level;

-- accords their true place to inductive and experimental methods and to knowledge and skills acquired through experience inside or outside the school, in particular in the context of pupil remotivation strategies; in this connection, it enhances the status of aesthetic, physical and manual instruction traditionally relegated to a position of inferiority in a French education system dominated by the hypothetico-deductive approach encouraged by the dominance of the abstract disciplines; it can, in this context, enable the natural characteristics of certain groups of pupils, in particular those relating to their ethnic origin and mother tongue, to be used to exploit cultural dimensions which today are neglected or disparaged;

-- makes even more obvious than before the need for a multidimensional evaluation culture in keeping with the objectives of the educational institution;

-- revitalises the notion of continuous and integrated support for pupils, teachers, schools and areas that contain schools confronted with similar or related problems and provides an opportunity for testing the best forms of collaboration with parents.
Thirdly, as far the management of the schools is concerned, the improved evaluation procedures, to which we have already referred, help to provide a firmer basis for school and, of course, area plans and to make it essential that these should be formulated in the light of the particular problems of the environment in question. In this connection, progress reports assume real importance by making it possible to monitor the appropriateness of the measures applied in relation to local, regional and national objectives and the timescale (short, medium or long-term) involved.

More generally, the ZEP experiment could be useful if, in the context of a reformulation of planning policy, as noted in the last planning report, the development of a genuine regional educational planning strategy were contemplated. Within the framework of the continuing effort to equalise the education supply nationally, which, according to the Background Report, has produced encouraging results in the last few years, such a policy might advantageously take into account the lessons to be learned from the experience of collaboration among the various bodies within the ZEPs and necessarily and therefore highly complex regional educational planning. Indeed, effective action in this field depends on the clear geographical delimitation of the objectives to be achieved and, as previously pointed out, often involves intervention on the part of the various local authorities extending beyond their specific responsibility for a particular level of education and the corresponding educational institutions. Given the nature of these problems, and despite the still piecemeal aspect of the ZEP operation, one could well question the present relevance of the distribution of responsibilities between the various local authorities and between the latter and central government, and of the vertical and/or horizontal structures for the grouping and co-ordination of the various schools (sectors, districts) and, finally, of the relations existing between these structures and the employment areas.

The emergence of a genuine regional educational planning policy, which met the requirements of both quality and fairness of and in education, and which would embrace the ZEPs and/or other forms of innovation, might also have the advantage of preventing these priority areas from deviating from their primary mission of promoting the acquisition, on the most equal possible footing, of the skills necessary to both the individuals and the communities concerned. However, the examiners also consider that more appropriately "territorialised" teaching and learning strategies geared to certain types of school population might not be able to take on their rightful importance unless they are fully incorporated within the strategies for the adaptation of the system as a whole. This is why they are examining with interest, in relation to the above-mentioned potential of the ZEPs for changing the education system, the proposal in the Report of the Planning Agency concerning the transformation of the educational priority areas into "pilot areas". We consider that this step, aside from its importance as a means of avoiding any segregative or pejorative connotation attaching to the ZEPs, would enable the latter to become part of a more general innovation and experimentation policy where they would be in a position, because of their truly "militant" role, to make a very meaningful contribution to the accumulation of a core of knowledge in this field, which would of course be another feather in their cap. Admittedly, the examiners consider that a genuine integrated innovation strategy is still lacking and they suggest some possible orientations for this in Chapter V. They are aware that the conclusions at which they have arrived presuppose, on the one hand, that the authorities are quick to find solutions to the most obvious weaknesses of the ZEPs as they now stand and, on the other hand, that the potential mentioned above, which calls for discussion and analysis and progressive longer-term action, is rapidly taken into consideration. Otherwise this major experiment, like others before it, runs the risk of gradually withering away or of being swallowed up within the traditional functioning of the system.

4. Some recommendations
In their analysis of the educational priority areas and certain similar experiments, the examiners have stressed both the weaknesses of an innovation of importance for the future schooling of pupils in difficulty and its potential as regards the revamping of the education system as a whole. The examiners’ guiding principle has been the notion of opening up: the opening up of the so-called "sensitive" or "problem" schools to their environment in their mutual interest and the opening up of these experiments to the entire education system, again with a view to making progress on both sides.

With regard to improving the effectiveness of the ZEPs and similar schools through a genuine process of opening up to their environment, the examiners recommend that:

1) Urban policy (in the broadest sense) should continue to be the object of sustained attention on the part of the authorities so that, within that context, the schools can play their essential role in the qualitative improvement of their socio-cultural environment and benefit, through a better co-ordination -- or indeed integration -- of more coherent sectoral policies, from the support which they are entitled to expect to improve their effectiveness;

2) The authorities responsible for education at every level of decision-making, in co-operation with the local authorities concerned:

   -- should determine, on the basis of clearly defined goals and means of implementation, objective criteria for creating and developing or abolishing educational priority areas;

   -- should avoid spreading too thinly the aid granted, for the purpose of positive discrimination, to disadvantaged areas and the schools within them, by establishing a strict order of priority with regard to the measures to be taken, depending on the circumstances;

   -- to this end, should try to incorporate within the ZEPs, in a form to be determined, similar initiatives and experiments aimed at so-called "sensitive" or "problem" schools.

3) Various partnerships involving, jointly or severally, employers, local authorities, socio-cultural associations, etc., should be allowed to develop rapidly and freely in order, for example:

   -- to promote alternating classroom/workplace training methods both as a system of instruction and as a means of securing employment;

   -- to use the often multicultural and plurilingual context in order both to accord due recognition to existing cultures and to provide a better basis for the acquisition of the knowledge essential to the social integration of the pupils concerned;

   -- to mobilise human and material resources to assist the pupils in their efforts to acquire knowledge and skills;

   -- to strengthen the existing multidisciplinary support structures and, where necessary, to create new ones with partners whose assistance may be considered to be essential.

More particularly as regards the implementation of teaching and learning strategies and their effectiveness, the examiners recommend:
1) That, through a multidimensional evaluative follow-up process, all the partners be informed of the models and approaches which have proved most effective in solving the various local problems and that a system of exchanges between teaching teams, schools and areas be established in the shape of formal and informal networks with support from the competent authorities as required;

2) That provision be made for the rapid and flexible mobilisation of all the available human and material resources with a view to improving scholastic performance and social integration, among other things through more effective use of the institutional machinery, decompartmentalisation of the institutions and improved vertical integration of schools so that pupils can become properly qualified as they go through the system, largely as the result of a revamping of vocational education emphasising new forms of alternating classroom/workplace training and apprenticeship;

3) That a new approach to ZEPs should allow for experimenting, on a larger scale, with a form of recruitment based on the character and experience of the various categories of staff employed in the schools concerned and that the initial and in-service training of these teachers accord a definite place to the issues raised by problem schools and introduce the staff to action-oriented and evaluation-oriented research, in order that they can contribute to the building up of basic knowledge in this field, which might subsequently justify the transformation of these ZEPs into pilot areas as part of a revamped innovation strategy for education and training.

NOTE AND REFERENCE

III. HOW DOES ONE ENSURE THE QUALITY AND CONSISTENCY OF EDUCATION WITHIN AN INCREASINGLY DIVERSIFIED SYSTEM? THE CASE OF TEACHER TRAINING

1. Rediscovering the educational function

a) Primary and secondary teachers: a long tradition of compartmentalisation

The education system established in all the European countries during the course of the 19th century was marked by a deep division between two sub-systems:

-- so-called "primary" or "popular" education intended for the bulk of the population and dispensing -- within a framework of compulsory schooling -- a basic culture deemed indispensable in a developed society and economy;

-- "higher" (sometimes more modestly called "secondary") education, provided by the lycées and university-level institutions, reserved for a small minority of pupils (generally of middle-class and/or urban origin) and dispensing a culture based on what were considered to be the fundamental scientific disciplines.

During the course of the last century, each of these two sub-systems created its own logic, philosophy, pedagogy and quality criteria and, in particular, its own "teaching corps". Despite undeniable national variations, the clash between these two cultures, the primary culture and that of the lycées and universities, and between the two types of teachers that embody them, manifested itself in a strikingly similar way in all the European countries.

Everywhere there co-existed, on the one hand, the primary teacher, himself a son of the people, responsible for teaching the young peasants and workers the skills and, in particular, the discipline they would need to play their future role of producer, defender of the motherland and citizen (or subject) and, on the other, the lycée or university teacher, often a prime product of the system he was himself responsible for perpetuating, erudite and guardian of the higher values who -- over and above the differences of milieu, origin, wealth and individual interests -- ensured the identity and cohesion of the social groups formed by all the people with "standing", i.e. the well-born and/or well-educated.

The social and professional profiles of these two types of teachers played a key role in the two education sub-systems. The internal logic of each of the sub-systems, their objectives and quality criteria, their inner consistencies and the mechanisms by means of which the authorities controlled them were deeply imprinted in and reproduced by the recruitment and training of the teachers, the experience they had to acquire before they could obtain a regular post, their career prospects and even the kind of life they were expected to lead.
The primary teacher, a man respected by and even wielding power over the common people, an advocate and sometimes even a veritable missionary of modernity, was the living symbol of social success through knowledge and discipline; and as early as 1900 there began to appear the earliest sociological studies describing him as the first step on a ladder of social advancement leading from the grandfather, a simple peasant, to the grandson or great grandson, risen to become a man of learning, high official or successful industrialist.

The lycée teacher, on the other hand, although often himself the son of a primary teacher or minor official, had definitely hoisted himself above the people. He was the guardian of the only culture -- exclusively classical at first, until the sciences and modern literature were also admitted -- giving access to the highest positions and, in the fullness of time, to most forms of prestige and privilege (although the professional and economic situation of the lycée teacher himself was not always very brilliant). In order to illustrate the key role played by these two types of teachers, one needs only to mention Napoleon’s famous decree creating the "Imperial University", whose central element was a highly structured "teaching corps", or to recall the widespread conviction in France after 1870/71 that the real winner of the war was the Prussian schoolmaster.

This historical background would, of course, be incomplete without a mention of the emergence, during the first half of the 20th century, of a corps of former practitioners who were made responsible for providing technical and vocational education. Naturally, they developed their own culture. However, its evolution was less homogeneous than that of the categories of teachers mentioned above, depending on the importance that countries attached to the "dual" system.

b) The new post-reform environment

In the light of the new requirements, constraints and problems with which the education system found itself confronted after the great reform movement of the 1960s, this pattern of two or rather three social types of educator, the primary and lycée (but also university) teachers and the vocational training instructor, was seen to be totally out of date, for at least two reasons.

On the one hand, the social changes that had led to educational reform -- modernisation and urbanisation, the sharp rise in the standard of living, the development of the welfare state and an undeniable democratisation -- have also destroyed many of the social conditions which were at the very basis of the traditional teacher recruitment system and the traditional teaching career. For example, there is the disappearance of the social milieu from which the typical primary teacher sprang; the appearance of channels of social advancement more easily accessible and often more rewarding than a teaching career; and, except for a limited number of countries, the erosion of much of what, in former times, made the schoolmaster's profession attractive.

On the other hand, in the new structures to which the postwar reforms gave rise, the duties and tasks of the teachers, the demands made upon them and the skills explicitly or implicitly required of them are no longer at all the same as in the traditional structures and institutions. The reasons for this are numerous, often traceable to the new position of education in society outlined in Chapter I and, as we shall see, this is leading to a new form of professionalism. Later school-leaving ages and the fact that most people now spend more than ten to 12 years in school are resulting in much greater differentiation in the situation within schools. The heterogeneity of the clientele is increasing, while the competition from other
information media is compelling the schools to reflect on their own role. The often decisive influence of
the level of education on career prospects means that pupils and parents are placing much greater pressure
on the school and the teachers. The opening up of the school to modern life and the new skills that the
schools must necessarily teach their pupils are making curricula more unwieldy, are posing more and more
acutely the problem of the "return" on education and making it increasingly likely that the knowledge which
teachers acquire during their initial training will rapidly become outdated. Faced with a society both more
open and more demanding, teachers are finding that their educational role is becoming both much more
important and much more difficult than it used to be.

c) Towards an "open professionalism"

At the end of the seventies and the beginning of the eighties, the OECD, setting out from an
analysis of the response of various categories of teaching staff to various situations created by innovation
and reform, drew up a series of tasks which, taken together, define a new profile of the professional. This
evolution presupposes that the teacher, especially in secondary schools, is not a "specialist" in one or more
disciplines but a specialist in the teaching of that (or those) discipline(s) in the particular context of the
level or type of education to which he is assigned and in relation to various teaching and learning strategies.
This implies that, although the teacher must master the fundamentals of his particular discipline(s) and the
skills that need to be transferred, he specialises in the ways and means of transferring these.

The necessary abandonment of some of the more negative features of traditional professionalism
(a relatively authoritarian attitude to the pupils, strict control of the profession, almost total freedom of
initiative, etc.) meant that the concept of an "open professionalism" had to be defined. That is to say that
the teacher, operating within a framework of long-standing norms as regards listening to his pupils,
dialogue, co-operation and information and training, could devise, implement and modify, if need be,
opimum teaching and learning strategies. This also implies a break with "pedagogical individualism" and
a systematisation of the scientific analysis of teaching practice not only at individual but also at collective
level (teams of teachers, unidisciplinary or multidisciplinary school departments, professional networks).

By bestowing on the teacher, operating individually or as a member of a group, an authority based
on a more scientific approach, this new identity gives him -- and the school -- greater autonomy with
respect to the ongoing adaptation of the teaching. Now, together with high qualifications, independence
is one of the hallmarks of professionalism. It can help the teacher who, with his eyes open, turns to the
existing support structures (advisors, inspectors, pedagogical centres, etc.) in order to make a more informed
dgement of proposed innovations and methods of implementing them, in relation to the particular context
of his school and the surrounding community. In short, the examiners, while recognising that the quality
of the teaching depends on many factors, consider that the quality of the teachers themselves and their
general competence are key elements in the development of teaching and learning strategies adapted to the
diverse needs of the pupils and society.
d) How should the new teachers be trained?

In this context, in all the developed countries the question of the indispensable reform of the training of future teachers and the further training of those already in service has been and continues to be posed with the same urgency, though in rather varying forms that are strongly marked by national tradition. The following aspects need to be considered in this respect:

-- How to express in terms of skills the point of equilibrium between the function of conveying specific knowledge and that of educating in the sense of shaping the personality of the pupils?

-- What is the degree of academic specialisation essential to the transmission of high-quality knowledge and what is the corresponding degree of teaching skill which seems increasingly necessary to arouse the interest of groups of pupils?

-- How many teaching "trades" will need to exist alongside one another in order to shepherd the pupils through from infancy to the threshold of adult life along educational paths that are becoming increasingly specialised, how can the distinct professional identity of each be defined and how will it be possible to ensure a continuing dialogue between teachers engaged in very similar "trades" at parallel or consecutive levels?

-- In as much as European tradition requires that the functions of administration, inspection, counselling and instruction be performed by experienced teachers, how can we arrange for these categories of specialists also to acquire a new professional identity based on their experience, while remaining in touch with the realities at the grassroots?

These are some of the questions to which answers must be found. However, finding the right answers and building the vital broad consensus around them will not be easy. Depending on the circumstances prevailing in a particular country, there are several factors which, despite its urgency, could make the task particularly difficult.

Firstly, almost every country has entered upon a phase of massive expansion of secondary and higher education without having first thoroughly reformed and modernised the traditional methods of teacher training. Thus, a whole generation, tens or even hundreds of thousands of new teachers, recruited to operate an education system refurbished from top to bottom, have themselves been trained in accordance with objectives and programmes, and in institutions still impregnated with traditions and practices ill-adapted to the present circumstances of the profession. The consequences can be very serious. Somewhat unstable compromises between the after-effects of these traditions and the new demands made upon teaching generated by the reforms and the hybrid career structures which have been introduced can be combined with the effects of a progressive ageing of the teaching corps (an almost automatic consequence of the massive recruitment during the phase of rapid expansion of the school system 20 or 30 years ago). What often results from this is opposition and repeated, sometimes fierce resistance to any attempt to devise and implement teacher training truly appropriate to the new school and educational context.

Secondly, the great postwar reforms broke -- often deliberately -- with former pedagogical tradition. Apparently, however, the reform movement has not been very successful in creating a stable new educational "paradigm" which would enable the school system to respond to the radical changes that have
taken place (or come to light) in its social environment since the middle of the seventies and both guide the behaviour and day-to-day activities of serving staff and prepare the teachers of the future.

Thirdly, teacher training can no longer be limited to initial training and confer, once and for all, a status for life. In order for the educational institution to adapt itself, as necessary, to new requirements, it has, like other social institutions, to be persuaded to introduce a new human resources policy providing for optimum co-ordination between, on the one hand, the changing tasks outlined above and, on the other, the sequences of initial training, induction and in-service training. More than is now generally the case in many countries, this training and career advancement should be closely linked to a well-founded assessment of the results of the teaching and learning strategies implemented by the teaching teams. This would imply that all the training sequences should be tailored as closely as possible to real needs. In view of the increase in the proportion of the working population employed in the education and training sector, mentioned in Chapter I, and the resulting burden on national budgets, advanced countries can no longer do without a dynamic and effective human resources development policy in this field, if for no other reason than to be able to go on attracting individuals of high calibre.

2. The French situation: persistent divisions and the role of the authorities

a) The perception of problems of quality

The Background Report rightly recalls what education and its outcomes represent in the eyes of the French public. As previously noted, the close intertwining of education and training with the building of the French nation and its identity and their oft-proclaimed social role as guarantors of equal opportunities in life have meant that any serious debate on the transformation of the system rapidly encounters extreme politicisation and almost insurmountable obstacles. As the Background Report very clearly shows, the material and moral investment of the various socio-cultural groups in education stimulates the social demand.

In France, as elsewhere, there is much talk about falling standards without, of course, it being possible to prove categorically that this is really the case, since the evidence is often anecdotal or reflects the customary nostalgia of intellectual elites, always influential in the media and indeed in the political and administrative sphere, whose ideal -- in the most charitable interpretation -- has always been that every little French boy or girl should master the knowledge previously reserved for a small, intellectually and socially privileged group. In reality, as shown by the numerous international comparisons cited in the Background Report, France gives quite a good account of itself, unless it be considered that, like the ideal good pupil, it ought to be first in everything. Admittedly, there are shortcomings, but what advanced country can claim otherwise in the face of the flood of new knowledge, in some cases soon out-of-date (though believed to be eternal), and the emergence of increasingly sophisticated means of communication for storing the information and disseminating it in an increasingly interactive manner? The real problem seems to be that of compatibility between an officially proclaimed political objective of "high-quality education for all" (an objective shared by all the Ministries of Education of the OECD) and the way in which the education system currently manages its affairs.

As regards compulsory schooling and, more particularly, the first cycle of secondary education, the examiners have been struck by the persistence of phenomena already noted in the previous review.
They have the impression that the authorities have failed to solve a number of key quality problems such as:

-- the inadequate mastery of basic skills by about one-fifth of a given age group and its consequences in terms of falling behind and failure to obtain final qualifications;

-- the inability, in this connection, to prune out certain unidisciplinary programmes in order finally to make room, as many specialists and social partners have long demanded, for the sound interdisciplinary sequences indispensable to certain stages of education;

-- the very style of teaching and learning strategies, which is a victim of the prevalence of deductive methods and the feebleness of the spirit of experimentation, and which is not really capable of instilling the desire to go on learning that is essential to the success of genuine continuing education at the personal and/or professional level;

-- the stress laid on the encyclopaedism of the curricula -- expressed, in the case of some teachers, in an obsession with "finishing the curriculum", with the possible consequence that those who have not fully grasped the knowledge and skills needed to understand the subsequent sequences will be left behind -- rather than on promoting sound teaching methods closely geared to the content considered essential to the forming of the individual and as a training for life in society.

Even on the basis of this brief list which, of course, is not exhaustive, it has to be said that France is not an exception in this respect. Many so-called developed countries are confronted with the same problems and there are several reasons for this. Firstly, and we can scarcely do other than advise the French authorities to take note of certain more advanced national practices, France has no real tradition of curriculum development. If we use the English term "curriculum", it is because it is not limited to content but also concerns teaching methods (special didactics) and the entire learning context (general didactics based on an optimum combination of human and material resources). Unfortunately, the mini-crises which have recently shaken the Conseil National des Programmes (CNP -- National Curriculum Council), a new institution on the French educational scene, and which are not only related to its teething problems, have meant that it has not yet been possible to progress in a new direction. Some time must therefore be allowed to pass before an attempt is made to judge whether the recent measures taken by the Minister to reassign the tasks of curriculum development among a number of different bodies including the CNP, have solved the problem. Curriculum adjustment is only one -- admittedly basic -- element of a broader innovation policy. If the innovation strategy itself is not modified, as pointed out in more detail in Chapter V, it is scarcely possible to expect, for the time being, any radical change in curriculum development.

It is not by chance that "French culture" in this field should not really have progressed beyond the content of the curricula, as pointed out in the Background Report. First of all, the specialist teacher in secondary education and French universities in general have historically displayed a lack of enthusiasm, if not simple disdain, for pedagogies, which has naturally given rise to a form of teacher training lacking in professionalism. Secondly, a peculiarity of this traditionally centralised system is to leave the teacher, in his classroom, perfectly and personally free to use the teaching methods -- possibly not properly acquired and/or mastered -- that he considers appropriate. Thirdly, the organisation of the use of time in secondary education, where, in some cases, the teachers impose their own time-tables, without taking into account the
different learning paces of their pupils stemming from their physiological and psychological make-up and
their attention span, provides definite proof of the fact that, despite numerous conferences and papers on
this subject, the pupil is still not at the centre of the pedagogical relationship. At present, it is the teacher
and his mastery of his discipline that governs how time is used in the secondary school, with all the
inevitable consequences. A radical Copernican revolution to restore the pupil to the centre of the process
would certainly require more power and more involvement on the part of the management teams and their
partners on the school boards, or else a rigorous assessment by the inspectorates concerned followed by
effective action. The absence of unidisciplinary and interdisciplinary departments in the schools, the limited
dialogue between colleagues, the infrequency of visits by inspectors and advisors in a supportive role, and
indeed the reluctance of a number of teachers to acknowledge their weaknesses and ask for support, explain
why there are some teachers who feel overwhelmed by the tasks they are required to perform and, contrary
to what is sometimes thought, not only those in the so-called "sensitive" schools.

Thus, the question arises as to whether a key factor in improving curricula and methods might
not be to give full scope to a bottom-up strategy of information and evaluation with regard to local
practices, preferably in parallel with the still dominant top-down strategy of information about interesting
innovations which have proven their worth outside of the mainstream. The heterogeneity of the clientele
and nowadays of the teaching corps itself could also be put to positive use to enrich the debate and devise
new strategies. In addition, the various existing support structures such as the Institut National de
Recherche Pédagogique (National Pedagogical Research Institute), the Centre National de Documentation
Pédagogique (National Pedagogical Documentation Centre), the International Pedagogical Study Centre,
the national and regional inspectorates and local advisors, the continuing teacher training institutions, etc.
could encourage the creation of school and teaching team networks with a view to comparing the
experiments and modifications introduced with the agreement of the various authorities and assemblies.

b) The status of the French teacher

The historical development of education in France has led to teachers having the status of a civil
servant. Even though the various categories of teacher are not administered in exactly the same way, they
all benefit from this status which is supposed to provide stability and make them independent of the various
local authorities and influences. In difficult economic circumstances, the guarantee of tenured employment
is an additional advantage, even though it is a long time since their salary levels were commensurate with
their status and with the pay of people holding qualifications of a similar level engaged in other sectors of
activity. The recent example of the influence, direct or indirect, of the jobs crisis in terms of the sudden
increase in the number of candidates for the competitive examinations for the recruitment of teachers,
including in fields in which there were shortages only a short time ago (primary education, scientific
subjects), illustrates the volatility of the situation and the need to devise a long-term human resources
development policy, particularly since in certain scientific and technological disciplines shortages persist
or could very rapidly reappear with economic recovery or the emergence of a reluctance on the part of the
young to enrol in advanced courses in science or technology, as appears to be the case in some European
countries. At the same time, the principle of equal pay embodied in the terms and conditions of
employment, whatever the specialisation, stands in the way of a policy of adjusting the supply by adjusting
salary scales.

Is this civil service status, which might have been justified in the past, still appropriate today and,
if so, will it continue to be appropriate in the future? Above all, it is in connection with the relationship
between job profile and service obligations that the shoe pinches. As is well known, in France, as in many
other countries, the service obligations are based on a number of lessons to be given which, in France,
varies with the type of certification obtained in competitive examinations, and the higher the qualification
the fewer the teaching hours. This is a usual way of encouraging trainee teachers or serving staff to aim
for the highest qualification (which is coupled with a significant advantage in terms of pay over those with
the basic qualifications). The other professional tasks mentioned earlier, which should form part of the
"teacher’s job") do not feature -- other than exceptionally -- in the teacher’s "employment contract" and it
is therefore necessary to rely on persuasion and the professional conscience of the person concerned to
induce him to carry them out. Not to mention the difficulty of amalgamating a certain number of hours
over a given period in order to make the management of teaching time more flexible and perhaps make
more efficient use of the human resources available. This regulatory framework contradicts the notion of
professionalism by belittling tasks other than teaching proper. Another aspect of this "non-professionalism"
is the reluctance, with the usual striking exception of a small proportion of innovators -- differing from
institution to institution -- to supplement "in-service" training sessions with spare-time training. Yet one
of the definitions of a true "professional" is that "he doesn’t count his time", especially where acquiring new
skills is concerned. All this has not failed to tarnish the professional image of the teacher, particularly
among the dynamic managerial classes in the outside world of business and industry.

Thus, the principles of promotion and advancement applied to the teaching profession are the same
as those applied to the civil service in general, that is to say that, unfortunately, they are not based on the
actual performance of the persons concerned, their initiative or their participation in innovative experiments
and training sessions properly evaluated to determine their final impact on pupil outcomes. It is always
surprising to find that in any school (and indeed in the world outside) people are always very quick to point
out the most dynamic members of the staff, but that this distinction is not reflected in what they receive
in the way of rewards and promotions, except perhaps for the few which entail quitting the classroom to
become a principal, inspector, advisor or training officer. This inability of the system to reward the most
dynamic in order to keep them in the classroom has tended to dissuade some of the more brilliant graduates
from embarking on a career in education and merely reflects the lack of a genuine innovation strategy
necessarily based on a system of incentives which, at present, would seem to be incompatible with the rules
governing remuneration and duties.

The policy applied in the ZEPs, involving special allowances for those who work in them and
subsequent career advantages, may be regarded as the embryo of a policy, but it could remain just a
splendid exception if it is not incorporated into a longer-term plan for redefining tasks and rewards
throughout a person’s career. The criteria for transfer from one post to another make it difficult to recruit
candidates on the basis of character and experience, particularly within the special legal framework set up
for the ZEPs. In this connection, it should be recalled that, over the years, the teachers’ unions have been
assiduous in extracting minor concessions with regard to the assignment of teachers to experimental schools
with a view to setting up well-balanced teaching teams on the basis of "invitations to apply" and volunteers.
Civil service status not being in itself an obstacle to the genuine full-time teaching now increasingly
required by developments in the schools, the examiners cannot see why, on the basis of the various
experiments in progress, it should not be possible, first of all, to clarify the two components of a teacher’s
duties, namely teaching proper and all the other tasks, in the new manner in which these are now perceived
and then to test out a new set of conditions of service during a transition period. Consequently, the
examiners feel they should draw attention to the missed opportunity, a few years ago, to review both the
professional status of teachers and their pay system, when the heads of the principal teachers’ union
officially declared that reform was needed in this area. They are doubtful whether, in the new context of
splits between the unions, which encourages attempts to outbid one another and even demagogy, such an opportunity will soon present itself again.

c) Training and culture of the teaching corps

The very common situation described in the first section of this chapter, where there is a deeply entrenched and cultural separation between the various categories of teachers, also exists in France. Certain traits have accentuated, sometimes to the point of caricature, the divisions based on the acquisition of qualifications conferring different degrees of prestige and giving access to sharply differentiated positions and institutions. Dialogue between the different categories of teacher was rare. This cultural homogeneity of the specific categories of teachers naturally resulted in a long tradition of separate training. For primary teachers, vocational teachers and some technical teachers, this culture became all the more entrenched during initial training since this was dispensed in independent training colleges, sometimes quite small in size and, originally, residential. By contrast, future secondary teachers attended university to pursue their academic studies and prepare for their competitive examinations, which were themselves organised on hierarchical principles: a basic certificate, the Certificat d’aptitude au professorat de l’enseignement du second degré (CAPES) and, beyond that, the agrégation, a certificate giving admission to posts on the teaching staff of lycées and universities.

As mentioned in Section 1, the divisions between these categories of teachers were further accentuated by the socio-cultural origin of the student teachers. On top of these differentiations there was then superimposed, generally with the effect of reinforcing them, a system of unionisation by category. The strong emphasis on co-determination, in connection with the social dialogue in education, was mainly influential in the area of staff careers. The "school explosion" ought to made the unions realise that the advent of mass education called for qualitative measures, that is to say "something else" rather than "more of the same thing". However, the defence of a quantitative logic as the "lowest common denominator" acceptable to the various category-based unions (and even to the authorities in order to avoid disputes damaging to both the pupils and their families) was virtually impervious to the innovative proposals of groups that were too isolated within French society. This attitude of resistance to change was further encouraged by the absence of a break with the social circles in which the teacher moved, whether before taking up his post or in the course of his career. Admittedly, those studying at a university had the possibility of contact with a world less closed than that of the training colleges. Nevertheless, the reactions of the teachers and their representatives often demonstrated their ignorance of socio-economic realities and the social changes in store.

In terms of the qualifications obtained, the bulk of the teachers currently in service have been exposed to completely different styles of training. Whereas the primary teachers are trained and used to teach a number of subjects, the secondary teachers are trained and used to teach only one, and whereas for the primary school trainee teachers in the teacher training colleges the emphasis on versatility was accompanied by a well integrated and structured pedagogical training, the narrow education received in the universities, reinforced by preparation for the competitive recruitment examinations, was followed only by a notoriously incomplete teacher training course. The professional preparation of the primary teachers thus appeared to be more solid, thanks to the guidance received from the training colleges and the practical experience acquired in the practice schools, than that of the graduate secondary teachers. Thus, from the outset of mass admission to the first and then the second secondary cycle, it became apparent that, to some extent, underachievement could be attributed to the abrupt change of teaching style which the pupils had
to face. While the length of time spent at school was increasing and the pupils were becoming more and more heterogeneous, the teachers were having increasing difficulty in making a genuine contribution to integration and cohesion. The dialogue between primary school and the first secondary cycle, between the first and second secondary cycles, between general, technical and vocational education, etc. was not easily established.

In this connection, the example of the college (first cycle of general secondary education) is an illuminating one. It became the focus of educational reform and democratisation, which was introduced in successive phases and continues to be the subject of much questioning. As in other OECD countries that have followed the same path, its teaching body has necessarily been heterogeneous. Firstly, because sections previously belonging to different types of education to which specific categories of teachers were assigned have necessarily been grouped together. Secondly, because the conjunction of demographic trends, teacher recruitment crises and debates about the degree of specialisation of the teachers in this second phase of compulsory schooling led to the seconding of primary teachers, given additional training to equip them to teach in colleges. This additional training, equivalent to three years of post-baccalauréat study, took the form of a dual diploma, that is to say one based on two disciplines. Thus, there co-existed, not only before but after the Haby college unification reforms of 1975, a variety of different categories of teachers, some of whom had an inadequate pedagogical training coupled with an unsatisfactory academic training, whereas others had a good pedagogical training coupled with an unsatisfactory academic training. In the mid-eighties, the usual correlation established in France between the level of teacher training (academic) and the quality of the teaching the pupils receive (a correlation that has never been scientifically demonstrated, since quality education is the product of a complex recipe with numerous ingredients) led to the abandonment of the recruitment of dual-subject teachers to work in the colleges in favour of the recruitment of "unidisciplinary" teachers to teach only one subject. Of course, it will take time to reunify the teacher corps in the colleges since its heterogeneity is not likely to be rapidly affected by access to the CAPES through the internal channel.

However, should this reunification be based on a unidisciplinary approach? Would this ensure the efficient functioning of the college, a structure mid-way between the primary school and the more sharply differentiated options of upper-secondary education? Faced, like France, with having to get to grips with the development of this level of education, the OECD countries, with few exceptions, have never really got to the stage of staffing it with single-subject teachers. And the real question has always been that of the content and the style of teaching to be encouraged at this level and their implications for the profile (and the kind of qualifications) of the teachers to be assigned to it. Although it was more or less obvious that three years of post-baccalauréat education, combining academic and pedagogical training, was definitely insufficient for properly teaching two disciplines to new intakes of pupils, it seems certain that five years of training corresponding to the total duration of the present initial training course, if put to good use, would be enough to produce a well-equipped dual-purpose teacher. This type of teacher profile would have the advantage of ensuring a smoother transition between primary school and the subsequent studies in the second cycle and of encouraging an innovative and more personalised relationship between the teacher and pupils from backgrounds that differ far more than they did in the past. Moreover, in the small colleges that will continue to exist in thinly populated areas, it might facilitate the emergence of a teaching structure that could provide pupils with a sufficient range of options.

3. The response -- the Instituts Universitaires de Formation des Maîtres (IUFM -- University Teacher Training Institutes)
a) Recent developments: the first fruits of reform

It is not only in different teaching styles and a failure to promote a dialogue that the divisions between the categories of teachers mentioned above have found expression. There used to be inequalities in pay scales linked to the civil service grades to which the various types of certification gave access. The primary teacher’s certificate entitled him to a salary level (despite more onerous duties) lower than that of university-trained teachers and agrégés assigned to secondary education. Over the years, however, a slow improvement in the pay of primary teachers had brought it closer to that received by holders of the CAPES.

At a time when the raising of the school leaving age was making primary education the first stage of compulsory schooling, was it logical to maintain a "pay image" that placed primary teaching firmly at the bottom of the ladder and inspired feelings of inferiority? Have recent years not seen the development of a shortage of candidates for the competitive examinations giving access to primary teacher training, there being a natural preference to try for positions in secondary education, which still offer a slight advantage in terms of remuneration and continue to exert a certain attraction, particularly for women, on account of the shorter hours? There is nothing peculiar about the idea that the various categories of teachers should be considered to be of equal worth and should receive similar basic salaries. Why should multi-subject teaching, of fundamental importance for the future of the children and society at large, aimed at heterogeneous groups of pupils and involving a maximum workload be less well rewarded than single-subject teaching directed, at least in some schools, to more homogeneous groups of pupils and involving shorter hours? What is more difficult, however, is reconcile this relative uniformity of remuneration with the separate professional profiles for each of the levels and types of teaching concerned.

Accordingly, several political and union groups have set themselves up as advocates for a single teaching corps. However, a partially shared training does not necessarily imply a single corps, for all that a "single corps" may be desirable in itself. That depends on how it is defined. If "single corps" is understood to mean a group of professionals:

-- sharing the same personal and professional ethic,

-- equal in dignity, rights and duties,

-- having shared, at a particular moment, periods of common training, yet having benefited from specialised training enabling them to acquire a specific professional identity corresponding to the functions to be performed at their particular level,

-- and treated as equals within the context of a dynamic and relevant human resources management policy,

then the examiners can only endorse such a strategy. If, however, the notion of a single corps, through a possible shift in the common basic training, were to lead to a dilution of the professional identities proper to each main type or level of education, then the examiners would regard that as a false reform with initially corporative overtones, aimed at extending to a group of teachers, who were without them to start with, certain pseudo-advantages (viewed from the standpoint of sound management) which other groups already enjoyed. In this connection, they would emphasize that even the best training possible will never solve the problem of the contradictory and sometimes negative repercussions of the legal and administrative status of the teachers on the organisation of their work and their career.
Thus, when, in the early eighties, people began to think hard about the future of teacher training, the situation was already very complex and relatively unclear as far as the opposing forces and their positions were concerned. The work of the de Peretti Commission, though it threw light on many problems connected with the recruitment, training and use of teachers and though many of its conclusions are still valid, did not really have any immediate effect, like other proposals that were implicit in reports, commissioned at about the same time, on the primary school, the college and the lycée. However, in the light of the first assessments of the implications as regards teacher recruitment of the objective, supported by a political consensus, of bringing about 80 per cent of children up to baccalauréat level, it was clear that new recruitment and training measures would have to be introduced. The use of the two terms "recruitment" and "training" was an indication that the quantitative and qualitative aspects would have to be dealt with jointly within the framework of an integrated teacher policy. This effort to achieve integration and cohesion, which led to the creation of new training institutions, needs emphasizing, even though ultimately the pressure of events may have meant that no other strategy was possible.

b) The creation of the University Teacher Training Institutes (IUFMs)

Since the details regarding the organisation of the IUFMs have already been analysed in the Background Report, it will suffice to mention a few fundamental characteristics necessary to the discussion. The idea behind the creation of these institutions is to strengthen the professionalism of the teaching corps in all the schools in the light of the various challenges with which they are confronted. The objective of increasing the relevance of the new qualifications offered would be achieved, on the one hand, by a uniform procedure for the recruitment of university graduates and their enrolment in a university-level "professional school" for a two-year course, i.e. a total of five years training, and, on the other hand, by stricter emphasis on pedagogical training as an essential part of a more integrated professional training process. In order to promote previously non-existent contacts between the various categories of teachers, not only would trainee teachers who had opted for particular courses leading to given types of education be taught alongside one another in the same institution, but they would also follow a common core of courses in education science in order to give them a similar view of the context in which their particular profession is practised.

At the same time, the rules have been amended to officialise this equality of treatment for future teachers. The most important change has been to align the status of the primary teacher on that of CAPES holders in secondary education; this measure has led to the introduction of a new title "professeur d’école" for primary teachers and a similar pay structure. At both primary and first-cycle secondary level, internal promotion measures, based on in-service training, have been taken to speed up integration of this alignment of statuses. In order to attract trainee teachers into regions and branches of the profession where shortages exist, the old system of student grants has been revived. A big effort has been made to create posts as IUFM trainers, by assigning to these IUFMs various trainer categories that already existed in the old separate training establishments (subject to certain requirements as regards additional qualifications), or by directly appointing a number of researcher-teachers, or finally by providing funds to pay for courses given by university lecturers and outside experts. Thus, as professional schools at second-cycle university level, the IUFMs in every academy have been obliged to place their relations with the universities, from which they receive not only graduates as trainees but also specialists as trainers, on a contractual footing. They are also committed to developing various other partnerships in order to achieve their objectives, in particular with regard to the organisation of practical "work experience" in various types of schools and in enterprises for certain categories of student teachers. Finally, the IFUMs have been assigned many of the premises and much of the equipment that used to belong to the old training establishments.
Although none of the partnerships mentioned above may be easy to manage, that which must be established with the ministerial authorities with regard to the preparation of the trainee teachers for the competitive recruitment examinations is necessarily more complex. In fact, the originality of this new structure resides in having preserved, while updating and refreshing some of their substantive elements and creating a new pedagogical content, the traditional competitive entrance examinations. These competitive examinations are held at the end of the first year of IUFM, which accordingly is focused mainly on preparing for them, while the second year, following the competitive examinations, is chiefly centred on all the additional studies necessary and is an integral part of a sound professional training. At the same time, these competitive examinations have retained their old characteristics: regional for the recruitment of primary school teachers, national for the recruitment of secondary teachers. Even though a minority of specialists had long pleaded for the alignment of the recruitment examinations -- which are governed by the standards applying to the civil service as a whole -- as well as the structures and contents of training, the context of the reforms, aimed mainly at setting up a "unifying" institution, has not allowed any progress to be made in this direction.

The difficulty of getting these reforms of teacher training accepted by certain of the parties concerned with, to say the least, divergent interests, actually meant their being rushed through to take advantage of favourable political circumstances. And, as usual in France, the so-called period of experimentation and observation, conducted in three pilot academies, lasted only a year, without moreover the results being widely publicised. The following year, the introduction of the scheme inevitably created difficulties that could hardly be avoided in the setting up of so complex a new institution. Thus, the sudden placing together of trainers of different origins and cultures -- sometimes deeply entrenched -- plus the initial uncertainty with regard to the solution finally adopted for the competitive examinations/training problem did nothing to help the experiment get off to a good start. The subsequent disputes over the content of the professional test in the examinations for the CAPES have continued to be the subject of lively debate as to the soundness of the new institution, which has tended to tarnish its image and indeed dampen the enthusiasm of those who had helped to launch the project and then pilot it through its various stages.
c) The main weaknesses of the reforms

A first, substantive weakness noted by the examiners is the lack of co-ordination with the *Missions à la formation des personnels de l’éducation nationale* (MAFPEN - Ministry of Education Personnel Training Missions) and hence the absence, hopefully only temporary, of a clear conception of the necessary interlinkage between initial training, follow-up and support during the first years of service and in-service training. Admittedly, as the Inspectorate General recently pointed out, the in-service training itself needs looking at closely to assess its real effectiveness in relation to its high cost. However, this training, in particular, should be the spearhead of a more dynamic personal and professional career progression, which would certainly entail a revision of promotion procedures in the teaching profession. As regards follow-up training from the moment the new teacher takes up his duties, this would involve the setting-up of a multilateral partnership which would require detailed consideration and planning, especially as it would involve a minimum number of hours off duty to receive the appropriate counselling and support and the additional training needed to add the finishing touches to the person’s suitability for the post.

The relations between the IUFMs and the universities continue to be a matter of concern, some people fearing that their independent status vis-à-vis the universities may retrigger an "école normale type" isolation syndrome, especially as very often the new institutions have been able or obliged to set up within the walls of the former training colleges. Other arguments are more dubious, in particular that concerning the risk of being cut off from the "spirit of research" or from university research itself. In the present context of compartmentalisation of the constituent elements of higher education and research, already addressed by the OECD in 1986\(^2\), the proposal, made by some, that the IUFMs should be integrated completely into an insufficiently multidisciplinary university system scarcely seems viable. This suggestion is unlikely to arouse much interest until French higher education and research start thinking about adapting their structure with a view to greater openness, coherence and integration.

The other fundamental problems relate to the ability of the IUFMs to recruit and suitably train certain key categories of teachers. The first category concerned is that of the future "professeurs d’écoles" (former primary teachers) and the question relates to the content of the "licence" (bachelor degree) on which their recruitment is based. Although the advisability of continuing to insist on a strictly multi-subject role for the primary teacher may be debatable, it is in any event necessary for the future teacher at that level to follow a course of initial professional training whose first phase is multidisciplinary in character. The present student teachers hold degrees which are either unidisciplinary or in education science and psychology which, in themselves, do not ensure a sufficiently broad basis of academic knowledge upon which to graft a thorough training in pedagogy. Moreover, few student teachers have degrees in science, mathematics or technology and this overwhelming predominance of non-scientific degrees, the sign of a certain imbalance in the current output of graduates in general and university graduates in particular relative to the needs of society, may prove to be even more dangerous if it prejudices the very education of future generations.

Admittedly, this question also arises in other countries where the "universitisation" of training continues to raise the usual problems of dialogue between the ministry or services representing the demand for training and the ministry or services representing the supply. The traditional autonomy of the universities, if not the previous French experiment with a first university cycle solely reserved for future primary teachers which trapped them in a "dead-end" qualification, makes this problem a very difficult one to solve, to the extent that the traditionally unidisciplinary university tradition is liable to put forward the argument of the lack of real academic value of a multidisciplinary degree or of the organisational difficulty...
of introducing one, in particular as regards the allocation of human and material resources. The examiners were pleased to learn that a working party on the creation of multidisciplinary degrees, representing in particular all the potential users of such degrees, was due to submit its report in March 1994, and they would like to see pilot experiments with new multidisciplinary degrees set up without delay. Insofar as it is clearly desirable to ensure that these degrees are multifunctional, they could, of course, be supplemented during the two years of pedagogical training so as to ensure the "functionability" of the teachers who hold them. This might subsequently encourage some teacher specialisation in the larger schools and during the last two years of primary schooling and thus facilitate the pupils’ transition from primary school to college in terms of encountering a greater variety of adults in the teaching profession.

What is more surprising about the difficult birth of the IUFMs are the problems they are encountering in meeting the demand for the recruitment and training of technical and especially vocational teachers. Over the last ten years, the specialised teacher training colleges (known as national teacher training apprenticeship schools or ENNAs – écoles nationales normales d’apprentissage) responsible for training vocational teachers have been able to innovate and promote a form of training better adapted to the development of their clientele and the changing needs of vocational education and to establish partnership networks with various categories of employers. Certainly, the creation of vocational baccalauréats and indeed the trend in the technical lycées towards incorporating more general subjects in their curriculum and the necessary emergence from the former socio-cultural isolation of vocational education were arguments in favour of a broadening of the corresponding initial training. Although, as far as the general disciplines are concerned, a new balance has been struck, the same cannot yet be said of the vocational skills. Given the importance of the technical and vocational streams in the overall operation of the French education system, the shortcomings of the systems for the recruitment and initial training of these student teachers, confirmed by various sources, also call urgently for correction. Undoubtedly, these problems are partially attributable to the aforementioned difficulty of rapidly amalgamating what have been traditionally very different training systems.

d) The strengths and future of the model

Considering what has already been said and again with the caveat that the initial training of the teachers alone cannot guarantee an effective quality education for all, the examiners feel that the development of the IUFMs can, by helping to unify the teaching profession, promote the integration of the teaching system and develop its organisational flexibility. In particular, it seems to us that the common core of basic training is a strong point of the IUFMs and one that is likely to improve the mobility of the teaching corps and its ability to respond to the fluctuations in the numbers of pupils in the different levels, thanks, of course, to a sound supplementary training. This reinforces what we have been saying about the links that need to be forged between initial and in-service training. Moreover, the more rational use of existing premises and equipment could, through economies of scale, reduce the former waste of resources resulting from the proliferation of small autonomous training units.

143. The examiners would also like to stress another potential benefit of the reform, namely the pivotal role of the IUFMs in relation to the system as a whole. As we have said, it is potentially a prime tool in the hands of the authorities in assisting with the implementation of innovative policies in several fields. What is important is that there should be consistency between how the development of the schools is foreseen and the production of the requisite qualified teaching staff by the IUFMs. Being at the point of convergence between higher education (which "produces" an essential part of the basic training of the future
teacher), the schools which make use of their output of qualified staff, and the various authorities
responsible for controlling the supply of and demand for these qualifications, the IUFMs, working in
conjunction with the MAFPEN and the various existing support structures, are capable of becoming one
of the essential supports of the necessary reforms. Given the structure of higher education and research,
as described earlier, and the importance of using the lever of improved integration of the teaching corps
to promote change, this model displays a theoretical consistency that should be preserved.

We are also aware that, necessarily, the trainers in the IUFMs come from different backgrounds;
this rich potential should not be allowed to go to waste for lack of "integrative" training in the institution
concerned or, more generally, of a fresh concept of teacher trainers. This mixture of backgrounds could
make a very positive contribution and stimulate research into every aspect of the profile of the teaching
profession, provided that the trainers are in contact with both teaching practices and action-oriented
research, which could encourage a number of R&D projects carefully selected by the institute to which they
are assigned. Naturally, the success of this strategy will depend, among other things, on the extent to which
the qualifications acquired by the trainer in the course of his initial or continuing training are
interdisciplinary. In addition, we believe that specialists, themselves from a variety of backgrounds, and
experts in education and training problems should have a part to play in the training programmes organised
for these trainers.

Insofar as nothing they have read or heard has enabled the examiners to discern another viable
teacher training model, they consider that attention should now be concentrated on following up the reforms
and improving on them. Believing that the changes should be consolidated and given a chance to prove
their worth, they think that what matters now is to make up for the time "lost from an intellectual
standpoint" as a result of the political haste to introduce these reforms. Nevertheless, certain additional
conditions must be satisfied in order to ensure that the model endures.

Firstly, in the view of the examiners, the authorities could reactivate the National Conference of
IUFM Directors, on the basis, for example, of the model, suitably adapted, used for steering and monitoring
the University Technology Institutes, establishments not all that different in their organisational conception
from the IUFMs, in order to support and monitor the development of the latter institutions. Any reform
of importance in the OECD countries is now subjected to continuous follow-up on behalf of the promoters
of the changes, the players and partners involved in implementing them and, more generally, the public,
the ultimate source of the financing. In the case of the IUFMs, an integrated, multidimensional and, if
possible, "confrontational" evaluation procedure (including self-assessment by the IUFMs themselves), an
essential component of which would be to monitor the graduates as they take up their duties, could form
an essential part of the reforms or even provide a model to be followed. Since the methodology used in
this type of investigation is rather intricate, it might be advisable to start looking into this question
immediately, with the assistance of recognised experts, including foreign specialists.

Secondly, the examiners consider that the above evaluation would only be meaningful if it also
embraced the mechanisms and results of the competitive recruitment examinations for teachers in
connection with the functioning of the IUFMs. At this stage, we wish simply to suggest a few lines of
thought. Already, before the final framework within which the IUFMs are to function has been decided,
there has been discussion of the best -- or rather the least suitable -- moment for these competitive
examinations to be held. Moreover, we have doubts about the significance of the subject-related part of
the CAPES competitive examination. If the bachelor degrees awarded by the universities, which form the
basis for access to the IUFMs, are recognised national diplomas of equal worth, is there not a contradiction
-- if not indeed a waste of time -- involved in verifying their true value by holding a competitive examination? We consider that assessing the precise value added of the year of preparation for the subject-related section of the CAPES competitive examination should be done as a natural part of the process of optimising the content of and the time allocated to the initial training of the future teacher, a principle on which the justification of the maintenance and the moment of the competitive recruitment examination should also be based. Closer control of the quality of university degrees by means of a rigorous credentialling and monitoring procedure might be a valid alternative, and would seem to be all the more necessary in that new pluridisciplinary degrees are soon to be offered. A question mark also hangs over the higher-level competitive examination -- the agrégation -- which requires, as a preliminary, the obtaining of a subject-related master (maîtrise). This examination is supposed to provide secondary education with teachers with in-depth training in a particular discipline. We doubt whether such in-depth knowledge is necessary in order to teach in the first secondary cycle, especially when it is acquired, as has always been the case until recently, at the expense of a pedagogical training in keeping with the needs of the college. Is this not to some extent a waste of human resources? We also question whether the agrégation should continue in its present form. With a view to bringing the different categories of teachers closer together, providing an incentive to upgrade qualifications and enhancing career prospects, it might be desirable, for example, to award the title of agrégé through internal promotion linked to continuing professional training as a means of rewarding the most dynamic teachers and keeping them in the classroom. Thus, this agrégation should be based on other means of testing knowledge, and the authorities and the specialists on the examination boards might finally have a chance to show that the time has come to stop talking about the validation of knowledge and skills gained from experience, which the institutions themselves have been extolling for some time, and put it into practice. In the interests of equal treatment for the various categories of teachers, there could be an agrégation for each of them, that is to say an agrégation for primary education, lower secondary education, etc. The examiners consider that a strategy of this kind, coupled with a thorough revamping of continuing professional training, could help to make the system more dynamic.

Thirdly, the examiners consider that the reform of the IUFMs would not be complete unless it is co-ordinated with in-service training programmes as part of a framework of continuing personal and professional training. This training should be designed, to a greater extent than it is at present, to achieve a closer match between actual requirements and the training supply. In fact, we are concerned about the effectiveness and the efficiency of the MAFPEN. Continuing professional training is necessarily expensive. Like everything else, it should be part of a national, regional and local human resources development and management policy. The perusal of a number of programmes académiques de formation (PAF -- academic training programmes) and remarks on the value and conduct of certain training courses gleaned from those who have attended or assessed them lead us to believe that, at present, MAFPEN training is driven much more by the supply than by the demand. In a period of tight budgets and, in any event, so as to ensure the rational use of the time of those concerned, the authorities must be able to pinpoint precisely the differing requirements and then make sure that an appropriate high quality supply is available. Compromises always have to be made between long and short courses, between courses held in a particular institution for its own needs or those of a local group of teachers and courses held outside, and between courses for individual teachers and for those teams of teachers. Moreover, with regard to the consistency and progression of training courses for teachers throughout their working life, the examiners consider that France, unlike a number of other OECD countries, lacks a tradition of support for the teacher taking up his first post. Whatever the quality of the periods of teaching practice arranged by the IUFM, there is always a "reality shock" when the teacher is on his own for the first time. Some thought ought therefore to be given to what practical forms such support might take. This is quite a complex problem since it necessitates a certain
period (to be determined in accordance with the needs of the individual and the institution) of relief from other duties, the designation of a tutor from inside the school and a decision with respect to additional outside courses that may be necessary.

Fourthly and lastly, whatever the importance of the unifying and egalitarian model stemming from the profession’s civil service status, the examiners are anxious that various innovations capable of meeting a number of major fundamental needs should be tried out concurrently and for as long as is necessary to evaluate their results. Thus, before any widespread application is attempted, experiments with alternative models could be authorised and, on the basis of solid guarantees with respect to follow-up and evaluation, be officially approved and treated with equal respect. To an extent, the right to make mistakes could and should be accepted where complex issues relating to applied experiments in the social sciences are concerned. And it is better that the mistakes should be made then, rather than that possible shortcomings and errors should be perpetuated as the result of a process of institutional legitimisation brought about by widespread but premature implementation. In this connection, we could cite the example of the relationship between theory and practice so important in teacher training. As a good many countries have found, whether the initial training of their teachers has been "universitised" or not, the problem of how best to marry theory and practice still persists. At present, between 20 and 30 per cent of the training given in the IUFMs is carried out in the field. And traditionally it is the trainee primary teachers who spend most time acquiring classroom experience. Has this integration of theory and practice been a success and, if so, under what conditions? Might it not be worthwhile setting up some experiments of the pure apprenticeship type alongside the system of combined instruction and practical experience described above? In France, this already exists in the case of certain diplomas and by carefully monitoring the student teachers and their performance, something we have already had occasion to recommend, the merits of the various solutions could be compared. Apprenticeship would also have the advantage of encouraging genuine self-selection on the part of those concerned, as a result of their assume the role and responsibilities of fully-fledged teachers in the classroom. This would avoid the situation where it is not until a later stage that it is discovered that a person is definitely not cut out for this increasingly difficult profession.

4. Some recommendations

As has been apparent throughout this chapter, France and the other countries of the OECD are facing a series of similar problems concerning the relationship between the quality of teaching and the training and management of teachers, and need to come up with some effective answers. Consequently, the examiners recommend that possible solutions to these problems be considered under two main heads:

i) a strategy involving immediate action within the existing policy framework;

ii) a strategy involving analyses and experiments aimed at providing the basis for longer-term policies.


**a) The strategy involving immediate action**

i) In the examiners’ view, if would be useful if the potentialities of the IUFMs, institutions which are located at the point where numerous problems and basic institutions converge, were rapidly made use of to spearhead an innovation strategy. We feel that, because of its "pivotal" position, referred to earlier, the IUFM could mobilise numerous partners (schools and their projects, inspectors and advisors, university educational science departments, etc.) and become the head or co-ordinator of networks of innovating teams or institutions. For this to happen, a series of conditions would have to be met, the main ones being those set out below.

ii) The examiners therefore consider that steps could be taken to reinforce the identity of the IUFMs, for example:

-- by drawing up a mission statement for each IUFM, explaining its role in bringing about change at regional and local level;

-- by offering four-year contracts similar to those for the universities and, where need be, co-ordinated with these; for example, in common with the universities, the specialised laboratories of the CNRS, the *Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique*, etc., and without wishing to compete with them on their own territory, the IUFMs should be able to establish their own legitimacy through the kind of experimental development essential to quality teaching;

-- by insisting, in this connection, on the preparation of a fully-fledged and coherent institution (institute) working plan;

-- by ensuring closer co-operation and co-ordination between the various trainers;

-- by convening for this purpose, and fairly soon, well-prepared national IUFM conferences.

iii) The examiners are convinced that, if the experiment were accompanied by an evaluation of the institutions and a follow-up of cohorts of graduates, it would be possible to make certain that the right measures were being taken and to ensure the success of the reform. Would not a reliable steering group, composed of the principal partners and players involved, be a means of safeguarding the interests of all the parties concerned? Given the problems caused by the present gaps in the content of certain bachelor degrees obtained by the students before they enter the IUFMs, the examiners feel that it would also be useful systematically to provide, on the basis of an approved list of degrees and/or further courses of study, advice and guidance for students wishing to enter the institutes and sit the competitive recruitment examinations.

iv) As the examiners have emphasized, the reform of initial teacher training will not be able to achieve its full impact unless it is coupled with a logically structured programme of continuing training. In view of the structures already in place and the experience gained
so far, the examiners consider that a new policy could be rapidly introduced on the basis of:

a) the requirements as regards continuing training, which should be a key component of any school working plan;

b) the creation in each school or group of smaller schools of a training council responsible for arranging and monitoring practical teaching experience periods as part of initial training and various in-service training courses;

c) support for the development of local associations of schools which get together of their own accord to set up training centres or teachers’ centres in response to the increasing professionalisation of the educators and their diverse needs; these centres would elect a director/co-ordinator, prepare annual and longer-term training plans and seek assistance, where necessary, from local and regional multimedia centres;

d) an academy training plan drawn up following due consideration by the rectoral authorities of the requirements of the customers for this training and the possibilities of the suppliers of such training, the impact of which on the performance of the teachers would be evaluated by the inspectors and specialists;

e) a corresponding mobilisation of resources at regional level, including the specific contributions that might be made by various enterprises and associations.

v) The examiners consider that the gradual standardization of certain aspects of the conditions of service (pay) and initial training ought to be followed by a standardization, yet to be implemented, of the way the academy administers all categories of teachers. It would be useful to investigate why the status of some teachers (as civil servants) appears to be incompatible with an integrated system of management at academy level in touch with the real problems of recruitment and human resource utilisation, whereas this would seem not to be the case with other teachers (also civil servants) belonging to the same profession. The progress made along the path towards subsidiarity, reflecting the need to match more closely the places where the needs arise and the organisational structures capable of meeting those needs, would mean addressing the issue of the increasingly crucial relationship between competitive recruitment examinations, initial training and the regionalisation of the management of staff and the teaching corps. In this connection, the authorities concerned might give some thought to a new statutory and geographical “intertwining” of the management of all the human resources that are under the authority of the Ministry of Education and carry out some experiments in a few pilot academies.

vi) In order to help with the harmonization of the measures recommended with respect to initial training, recruitment mechanisms and in-service training, the examiners suggest the setting up in each academy of a committee to co-ordinate the recruitment and training of Ministry of Education personnel, chaired by the rector and comprising the directors of the IUFMs and MAFPEN, local and central government inspectors and representatives of school associations, teachers’ unions and student teacher associations. A national
committee of the same type could establish the main policy thrusts in relation to certain national objectives and draw conclusions from experiments carried out in the regions.

b) The longer-term strategy of analysis and experiment

i) The fact that some students -- on the grounds of every citizen’s right to present himself of his own accord for competitive civil service examinations -- do not initially enter an IUFM to prepare for the competitive recruitment examinations (but enrol directly in the university for this purpose) and that the aligning of competitive examinations and training continues to cause problems, prompts the examiners to suggest that the authorities give some thought to this entire set-up. As explained above, they consider that now would be a good time to clarify, with a view to making the management of the education system more coherent, the significance and necessary future developments of the competitive recruitment examinations and their relevance to the teachers’ new tasks and their personal and professional career.

ii) With regard to the problems posed by the tradition that primary teachers teach several subject whereas their colleagues in lower-secondary education teach only one, might it not be desirable, in collaboration with all the parties concerned, to study these problems further and more closely? In view of the discussions, exchanges and experiments that have already taken place in connection with a number of aspects relating to these issues, might it not be useful, in order to prepare the ground for suitable experiments, to review the state of the art in this area, taking into account the innovations introduced in the OECD countries that have made most progress in this direction?

iii) In their analysis of the French approach to continuing teacher training, the examiners drew attention to the “missing link”, namely support for the teacher taking up his first post. We consider that this aspect of training could be incorporated into the broader continuing training programme for the staff of each school as a whole, which should form part of any serious school working plan. To this end, we suggest that the IUFMs, MAFPEN, other support agencies and the competent local authorities should get together to determine what each could and should do to provide more support for novice teachers, which could extend over a period of two years or so. In line with the attitude advocated by the examiners of innovating and responding to needs, might it not be necessary for the competent authorities to undertake to organise an initial series of pilot experiments based on a constructive evaluation and backed by an active network of training partnerships set up for the purpose, before deciding on the widespread introduction of what might be described as a broadening and deepening of the initial phase of teacher training?

iv) In the next chapter the examiners will be looking at both the French version of alternating classroom/workplace training and the prospects for the more traditional apprenticeship model. As they have pointed out, both in the previous section and at the end of Chapter IV, if the French authorities were to embark on more apprenticeship-type training courses in higher education, including for the training of teachers, the examiners would like future vocational teachers and those already teaching this type of subject to be the first to benefit from any new opportunities of this kind. The examiners feel that it would
then be interesting to compare the results obtained with those of the courses currently
organised by the IUFMs. We would therefore like the various parties with an interest in
this type of training (the ministries and institutions that are customers for such training,
the ministries and institutions that supply it, the social partners and local authorities, and
interested academics) to begin thinking about this alternative.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

IV. THE PROBLEM OF HARMONISING THE DYNAMICS OF EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT. THE CASE OF THE NEW "INTERMEDIATE" DIPLOMAS (LEVELS IV AND III)

1. The short-lived post-war convergence: modernisation of the economy and expansion of education

The broad post-war consensus on the need for a thorough overhaul of the education system was legitimised to a considerable extent by one apparently obvious fact: demand for secondary and higher education from a growing proportion of the population would broadly coincide with the need for highly qualified labour both in the economy and in society as a whole. According to the widely-held view at the time, two broad trends in the development of industrial societies would converge in these needs.

On the one hand, with more efficient technology and more rational organisation, traditional manual occupations in farming, craft industries and manufacturing, requiring relatively little education, would gradually lose their importance, or even the basis for their existence. Large firms with a sharp horizontal and vertical division of labour, which were becoming increasingly common not only in manufacturing but also in a growing number of modern service industries, called above all for workers who could rapidly familiarise themselves with clearly defined tasks, were willing to change work, jobs or even sector of activity frequently and were capable of quickly acquiring the new skills needed to take up a new job.

On the other hand, economic performance and social stability increasingly depended on services such as research and development, education and training, law and management, health and culture, requiring large numbers of highly educated workers with skills in which the scientific element was predominant.

The most urgent need was thus to meet growing demand for highly qualified labour as quickly as possible, by rapidly expanding secondary and higher education while ensuring that young people incapable of following more demanding educational tracks acquired at least a solid general culture. In this way, the full potential of economic growth could be realised; the additional resources made available in this way would mean that rising expenditure on a rapidly expanding education system could be funded without difficulty. This was the key thrust of the education policy of which the OECD was one of the most convinced and convincing advocates during the twenty years after the Second World War.
a) A pattern common to all OECD countries

Following a pattern whose fundamental characteristics are common to all OECD countries (with national variants to which we shall return), this view had two main consequences.

First, in order to meet the labour needs of both the economy and society, education policy could mainly concentrate on increasing the number of places in traditional higher education streams (including making them more highly specialised and/or updating aspects of their curricula where necessary). Furthermore, it was precisely these streams, highly regarded and extremely well placed in the socio-professional hierarchy, that were at the centre of social demand for education. Thus the main, and sometimes the only, question of the first forecasts of education needs (carried out using what was then called the "manpower approach" or, more accurately, the "manpower demand approach") was the number of graduates that needed to be trained by a given date. The results of these forecasts were often regarded as important benchmarks for all reforms of the education system.

Second, throughout the entire post-war period marked by the reform and expansion of education, the central issue of education policy was neither the need for graduates nor the education/employment interface but the internal structure of the education system. How could talented young people, irrespective of their social origin, be enabled to gain access to the higher levels of education? What was the best way of catering for the rising numbers of young people crowding the doorway to higher education? What was the best way of directing them, or even channeling them.

Until the mid-1970s, the changes in employment structures and qualifications in all the European OECD countries confirmed this view and the education policy that it inspired. At a time of robust economic growth and rising living standards, the number of jobs and the number of highly qualified working people grew strongly and rapidly. In all OECD countries, there was a sharp decline in jobs traditionally requiring little or no education or at most a modicum of practical training. Nobody doubted that these trends would continue. Leaving aside the succession of larger and smaller age cohorts, which sometimes differ considerably from one country to another and may significantly accelerate or delay the expansion of education, national variants on the general pattern outlined above mainly concern two apparently closely linked areas: preparation and training for manual and operative occupations, and pathways to "intermediate" occupations.

Trends in these two areas in the 1960s and 70s in OECD countries, especially in Europe, can be described without excessive over-simplification in terms of two variants ("ideal types"). We shall deal with the specific position of France later.

b) National differences: preparation and training for manual and operative occupations

One of the points on which OECD countries clearly differ is the path by which the majority of an age cohort completing compulsory education traditionally enters manual and operative occupations, whether directly or through apprenticeship. It was widely accepted that a modern society required all working people, even if they carried out only simple and manual tasks, to be much more capable than before, and that such capability required a good general education. Flexibility, mobility and continuous training were the generally accepted key words. Both in debates on education policy and in day-to-day practice, the industrialised countries of Europe gave very different answers to the question of whether it
was necessary, or at least desirable, to give young people a specific vocational qualification as well as a broad general culture before they embarked on their working lives.

By synthesising the strategic education policy options adopted by different countries and the broad trends that have appeared, two sorts of ideal type can be distinguished. In one case, which might be termed the southern European variant, preparation and training for practical occupations fell victim to the expansion of education. The principal effect in these countries was a quantitative reorientation of flows of young people: fewer and fewer young people leaving school at the minimum age entered working life directly as family helps, manual workers or sales assistants. Increasingly, the minority of young people taking this path are victims of obvious disadvantages, either because they live in areas that are remote from educational centres, or because they have been brought up (very often the children of immigrants) in a socio-cultural atmosphere different from the one that the education system assumes to be normal, or because they have mental or physical handicaps. All the other young people, if they were not to be branded as failures, were supposed to continue their studies towards the baccalaureat and higher education.

In countries corresponding to the second variant (characteristic in particular of German-speaking countries), the dominant conviction both in the population as a whole and in educational circles was that it was in the best interest of young people not only to acquire a broad general culture but also to learn a trade, even if it risked becoming obsolete as a result of changes in the structure of employment. In these countries, the expansion of mainstream secondary education was matched by the preservation and even extension of vocational training facilities and institutions (especially, though not exclusively, apprenticeships), either by modernising methods and curricula, or through the widespread practice of learning a trade (often tertiary) after the baccalaureat or an intermediate level diploma.

It is fairly clear that in countries corresponding to this second variant, ie, countries which have maintained practical vocational training on a large scale, the urge towards the baccalaureat and higher education has taken place later and, so far, has been and still is less strong than in countries corresponding to the first variant. Another relevant point is that in these countries, salary scales, working conditions and social standing are less strictly "meritocratic"; there is consequently less pressure to aim at all costs for the highest possible diploma.

However, this does not mean that there has not been a steady rise in the proportion of an age cohort staying in full-time education beyond the minimum school-leaving age (which is also higher now than it used to be), passing the baccalaureat, beginning higher education and gaining a level I or level II diploma.

c) National differences: access to "intermediate" occupations

Another difference between OECD countries is the manner in which they meet the economy’s need for "middle" or "intermediate" qualifications, corresponding to technician, lower and middle executive positions. In step with economic growth and the spread of large firms with a clear-cut division of labour, the importance of these occupations and their share of the labour force has risen sharply, or even very sharply, everywhere. The technological skill requirements of intermediate occupations have often risen at the same time, making traditional recruitment methods based on the accumulation of experience and slow internal promotion increasingly unsatisfactory.
Countries corresponding to the second variant, where the vocational training system has often been modernised, were able to meet the dual demand for quality and quantity by mobilising well trained white and blue collar workers (very often through additional continuing training). The procedure was made all the easier because automation, reorganisation and, in many cases, far-reaching rationalisation meant that skilled workers employed in mainly operative tasks could be replaced by low-skilled workers that the labour market provided in abundance.

Clearly, this approach had a number of advantages. Needs could be met quickly and at relatively low cost. There was no significant time lag in adapting qualification and skill profiles in intermediate occupations to the real situation in companies. As an important aspect of their skills, the new technicians and middle executives often brought a wealth of practical experience acquired in operative capacities to their new functions. Furthermore, the recruitment of technicians and middle executives from operative ranks triggered large-scale promotions which had considerable social effects (notably the social and political integration of the most highly qualified blue collar workers) and doubtless contributed greatly to the positive image of practical vocational training.

However, countries corresponding more to the first variant, faced with growing demand for intermediate occupations, found themselves obliged to create massive new initial training streams in secondary and higher education for this type of occupation.

It is true that this option, more or less inevitable with regard to initial training for intermediate occupations, has considerable advantages both for the economy and for the education system. It means that the technological and scientific level of future technicians and middle executives can be raised rapidly, taking into account the most recent developments. It means that these professions can tap into a source in secondary education that would be inaccessible under the promotion/continuing training option. It also very specifically meets the urgent need within the education system to relieve pressure on traditional higher education streams and institutions by offering alternative tracks which, being shorter and offering good employment prospects, are likely to appeal to young people.

However, the option also contains a number of disadvantages which are at least to some extent the counterpart of the advantages we have just mentioned. They include, for example, the lack of practical experience on the part of future technicians and middle executives, the time it inevitably takes before the first graduates arrive on the labour market and the more or less permanent risk that the training streams in question, facing competition from older and often more prestigious streams and institutions, will fail to find a balance between a marked vocational orientation and a sufficiently high educational level, thus losing their distinctive cast.

Other particularly adverse effects of the rather complex relations between educational levels, employment hierarchies and career prospects may only show up after a considerable length of time. They are most likely to take the form of extensive barriers to promotion, as much for those in intermediate occupations themselves (who generally start their professional careers in middle-ranking positions) as for white and blue collar operatives, who have practically no hope of advancement to middle-ranking positions. We shall return to this problem in the context of the specific situation in France.

d) Highly stable behaviour patterns among families, educators and employers
The convergence of economic modernisation and the expansion of education did not proceed at the same pace in all OECD countries, or last the same length of time, and generally came to an end during the 1970s. But in all countries it lasted long enough for highly stable behaviour patterns to become established among all those involved, on the basis of experiences which, while entirely contemporary, were also often reinforced by older traditions.

First, parents and young people increasingly reasoned in terms of what might be termed, according to a theory which originated at the same period, investment in human capital. This approach fully coincided with a more general market-oriented approach whose growing influence in society was the almost natural consequence of the spread of market-oriented forms of production and distribution. During the period in question, more time spent in education and higher-level diplomas could rightly be regarded as investments which would more than likely yield substantial returns in the form of considerably higher than average income, good working conditions, better social standing, etc. Positive and negative examples abounded among parents, friends and parents’ colleagues, demonstrating the success of those who followed this approach and the failure of those who had wasted their chances at school. The conviction became increasingly prevalent, in ever broader sections of the population, that it was in children’s best interests to pursue their education as far as possible, and many more children than had originally been imagined proved that they were quite capable of going a very long way indeed.

A deteriorating employment situation since the mid-1970s has not in the least weakened the influence of this conviction; rather, it has helped to strengthen it, especially in countries corresponding to the first variant outlined above. The likelihood of repeated or long term unemployment on entering working life demonstrably decreased as the educational level rose, and many young people, facing uncertain employment prospects, preferred to stay longer in the education system rather than expose themselves to unemployment.

Second, the attitude of teachers and of the education system almost everywhere helped to reinforce the attitudes of parents and young people described above. The primary reasons for this were educational, because examination pass rates are regarded almost universally as one of the main criteria for assessing the quality of schools and teachers. Furthermore, no good teacher likes the idea that good pupils (i.e., pupils who are willing and able to learn) should leave school before they have gone as far as they can. However, the interests of teachers as a body, like the organisational interests of educational institutions, also run along these lines.

Third, the influence of corporate recruiting practices was a significant factor, especially in countries where traditional forms of apprenticeship had more or less disappeared. The more the system succeeds, or appears to succeed, in effectively streaming young people according to their ability and willingness to learn, the more rational it seems for employers to use levels of educational attainment as a reliable indicator of the value and potential of candidates for a particular position, either because of the knowledge and skills learnt and practiced in demanding educational streams and institutions, or because it is in employers’ interests to invest the cost of additional training in people who have already proved their abilities within the education system.

Thus, in all OECD countries during the post-war years, structures took shape in which the hierarchy of employment and socio-professional situation is more or less identical to the hierarchy of diplomas. People with higher education diplomas could generally pretend to senior executive positions, provided that they could find employment (and so far, in almost all OECD countries, the unemployment
rate for graduates remains lower than the average), while those leaving school before taking the baccalaureat had to be satisfied with lowlier, or even purely operative, positions until they managed to prove their real skills and abilities.

2. Changes since the 1980s and new challenges to education

Since the second half of the 1970s, a fundamentally different pattern has become increasingly apparent in almost all OECD countries, in which the dynamics of trends in education and employment are much less closely synchronised than before. The pattern is the result of the coincidence of three new trends in employment structures: the continuing and even growing social demand for education; the attitudes engendered among parents and pupils, teachers and employers as a result; and the close correlation between levels of qualification and socio-professional expectations.

Rapid growth in tertiary functions, especially in public services, which caused a sharp rise in demand for highly qualified labour in the 1960s and 70s, has slowed or stopped altogether. In many cases, expansion of the workforce has reached saturation point. Furthermore, given the age structure and the preponderance of younger age cohorts, there is not even the same labour turnover. Slower economic growth has also obliged governments to make sometimes swingeing cuts in public expenditure.

At the same time, demand for intermediate qualifications in the economy has gradually slowed. The Taylorist and bureaucratic model, which had marked the development of manufacturing and substantial sections of service industry since the late 1950s, causing a massive increase in jobs for technicians and middle executives, appears to be falling out of favour. The trend is no longer towards the creation of ever larger organisational units characterised by a sharp hierarchical and functional division of labour, but towards a reduction in the number of hierarchical levels, the delegation of more autonomy and responsibility to smaller line units and the slimming down of oversized staff units.

New forms of organisation and rapid progress in mechanisation and automation have sharply reduced the need for little-qualified blue and white collar staff. This is a direct consequence not only of higher productivity, with fewer people producing more goods or services, but also of far-reaching changes in the qualifications required for the jobs that remain. In the high technology context of modern manufacturing (and some service industries), a growing proportion of the labour force, both blue and white collar, is expected to be capable of much more than merely carrying out precisely defined and highly routine tasks satisfactorily. Even at operative level, considerable vocational and general knowledge and skills are needed in order to guarantee high-quality products, a high utilisation rate for increasingly expensive plant and equipment, and great flexibility in the face of increasingly turbulent markets.

With some slight differences, the results of these three trends have been the same in all OECD countries. There is a growing surplus of young people who have gone on to higher education, whether or not they have obtained a diploma. They are in increasingly fierce competition with those who have obtained an "intermediate" and generally highly vocationally-oriented qualification (either in initial training in countries corresponding to the first variant or in continuing education in countries corresponding to the second variant). The tendency to replace "lower level" skills with "higher level" diplomas is becoming increasingly marked.
Employers are finding it increasingly difficult to meet their quantitative and, above all, qualitative needs for operative labour. The apparently growing shortfall is not due solely to the quality of training in terms of content or equipment. The root of the problem lies in the fact that it is increasingly in the interest of employers to look for workers, even for mainly operative positions and in extremely advanced or even vital manufacturing and organisational contexts, whose intellectual and executive capacities would also enable them to pursue their studies to a relatively high level.

The problem is obviously at its most acute in the case of skilled workers in manufacturing industry: the economic fate of most developed nations continues to be played out in manufacturing. It is in manufacturing industry, under the pressure of international competition and consequently of the widespread introduction of new technologies, that changes in employment structures are the most urgent and, in many cases, have gone furthest. But at the same time manufacturing jobs in most OECD countries are at a considerable disadvantage in terms of income, hours, working conditions and/or social prestige, compared with other jobs to which better school results or higher education give access.

3. The answers to these problems in France

During the first phase of extremely rapid expansion of education, French education policy and the French education system corresponded in many respects to the first of the two models outlined above. Mainstream education reigned supreme and all the traditional forms of preparation for manual and operative occupations were in decline. However, as the adverse effects of the massive expansion of education began to show up (almost one-quarter of an age cohort left the education system without any qualification and the drop-out rate from higher education was also high), and with a growing awareness that France’s most redoubtable competitors had chosen other options, French officials made considerable, and sometimes highly innovative, efforts to redress the balance in favour of vocational training and apprenticeships. We shall look more closely at three of these innovations, rather briefly at the first, which is also the oldest, and in more detail at the other two, which are much more recent.

a) The technological stream and new level III training options

The first innovation, dating back to the 1960s, was the creation of a specific intermediate level initial training system, the most important features of which are:

-- vocationally-oriented lycée sections (initially called "technical" sections, subsequently renamed "technological" sections);

-- a specialist baccalauréat;

-- two-year post-baccalauréat courses, either in a university institute of technology (IUT) or in special lycée sections. These courses lead to two types of diploma, an Advanced Technician’s Diploma (BTS) or a University Diploma of Technology (DUT), awarded on completion of studies at an IUT. However, the actual technological content of these courses does not always reflect the official terminology, since a considerable proportion, or even a majority, of students are studying for and graduating in service occupations, from accounting and secretarial work to tourism.
These intermediate level and more or less vocational streams have rapidly become established. The number of pupils passing technical or technological baccalaureats rose from barely 29,000 in 1970 to almost 111,000 in 1990, ie, from around 4 per cent of an age cohort to around 14 per cent (the percentage of all those passing the baccalaureat rose from around 21 per cent to almost 55 per cent). The trend in the number of level III graduates (BTS-DUT) has been similar, rising from 17,000 to more than 80,000 over the same period, corresponding to over 10 per cent of the age cohort. Post-baccalaureat "technological" training (Bac + 2 in French terminology) has been especially successful, establishing a solid reputation both in the education system and on the labour market. We shall return to the subject later.

b) The overhaul of vocational training at level V

Since the late 1970s, there has been a growing awareness in France that there seemed to be a close link, despite considerable endeavours to remedy the situation, between the persistently high numbers of young people leaving school without any qualification (over 15 per cent in 1980) and shortcomings in vocational training at school and in apprenticeship schemes. Traditional training courses leading to the Certificate of Vocational Competence (CAP) enjoyed little esteem; a large number of courses and diplomas had in part been superseded by technological change; pass levels were low or very low, with failure rates in important occupations sometimes considerably in excess of 50 per cent; employers were little inclined to recognise young people’s diplomas when they arrived on the labour market. For these reasons the overhaul of vocational training, which aimed to modernise the system, make it more effective and enhance the status of diplomas, became one of the top priorities of French education policy in the 1980s. Three initiatives were particularly important.

The first initiative aimed to improve the quality of vocational streams by grouping occupations and updating diplomas, by renewing equipment in school workshops and by giving pupils in mainstream schools better preparation (in particular by the introduction of technology as a subject and the creation of preparatory classes in lower secondary schools).

The second initiative consisted of a set of measures designed to enhance the status of vocational streams, the most important being the decision to delay streaming into general and vocational streams by two years so as to avoid excessively early orientation, and the establishment of closer links between streams leading to the CAP, which had previously been regarded with some justification as a "dead-end", and those leading to the Diploma of Vocational Studies (BEP), a more ambitious option whose more advanced technological and general curriculum gave pupils the opportunity to continue their training directly after the CAP.

The third initiative aimed to improve cooperation between vocational training in schools and industry; a joint effort was made to improve the status of apprenticeships, which had mainly survived in craft industries. The initiatives taken along these lines (such as promoting contacts between education and school authorities and national, regional and local trade bodies; work experience for pupils and teachers alike; partnerships between schools and industry, etc.) had a triple aim:

-- to make schools more open to the world of work, in order to give teachers and pupils a more accurate picture of life in a company and to overcome many teachers’ negative attitudes to industry;
through concrete experiments, to enhance the prestige of vocational activities and the training courses leading to them and to encourage more pupils to enter vocational training;

to establish closer links between schools and businesses and, by increasing the vocational content of training, substantially to improve the chances of young trainees finding employment corresponding to their qualifications.

It is not easy to evaluate the success of the various measures, only some of which have been mentioned here. The number of young people leaving school without qualifications has fallen, though it is still too high. However, it has not yet been possible to stabilise, let alone increase, the percentage of young people who, on leaving college, go on not to a mainstream lycée but to a vocational lycée (or, for around 13 per cent of an age cohort, start an apprenticeship). Just as before, a significant proportion of young people in vocational streams fail their exams and leave school without qualifications or, despite any diploma they might have acquired, find themselves faced with the prospect of indefinite unemployment.

c) Vocational baccalaureats

Probably the most original innovation in French education policy in reaction to new problems and new challenges was the introduction of a stream in which pupils could acquire both vocational skills and the right to go on to higher education, sanctioned by a new so-called "vocational" baccalaureat.

Vocational baccalaureats were introduced following the overhaul of short-cycle vocational education (CAP and BEP) and are intended to consolidate the reform process and take it a step further. The vocational baccalaureat was created to achieve a set of closely linked objectives:

-- to enhance the status of vocational training by offering the possibility of further study in streams hitherto regarded as dead-ends. From this point of view the "baccalaureat" stamp had a strong symbolic value, given the attachment to the qualification in France;

-- to train new types of highly qualified workers, in line with new forms of organisation and a less sharply defined division of labour;

-- to take the opportunity of forging closer links with companies, by designing diplomas in close collaboration with industry representatives and by introducing sandwich courses to give pupils hands-on experience in the workplace;

-- to extend opportunities for obtaining qualifications during working life, since statutory measures were introduced to make it possible to prepare for these qualifications in continuous training.

Vocational baccalaureats sketched out the possibility of an approach based on vocational streams, as opposed to the approach based on the level of training that predominated within the education system and characterised the broader education/employment interface in France. The French authorities were apparently fully aware of the boldness of this move, which was intended to form part of two much larger projects on what might be termed a "societal" scale: the vast and long-standing ambition of raising the
general level of educational attainment across the population and increasing equal opportunity; and the much more urgent ambition of winning the "economic battle" against increasingly fierce global competition.

A few extracts from the speech with which the Education Minister at the time, Jean-Pierre Chevènement, introduced the technological and vocational education bill in May 1985 emphasise this dual ambition.

"We will not be on the winning side in the economic battle if we are not able to train baccalaureat-level workers in large numbers..."

"At the present time in France, 37 per cent of young people in a generation reach baccalaureat level and 27 per cent pass. These numbers should be raised to 80 and 50 per cent respectively by the year 2000..."

"A greater variety of pathways to the baccalaureat and to higher education is the precondition for success..."

"Vocational lycées will prepare pupils, beyond the CAP and BEP, for the vocational baccalaureat, a level IV diploma intended to give direct entry into working life. The vocational baccalaureat will be a level IV advanced vocational qualification corresponding to broadly expressed needs in industry."

"It goes without saying that vocational baccalaureats are not being created at the expense of existing technological courses in upper secondary education. Our perspective is one of growth and expansion, not one of redeployment..."

French officials regard the creation of the vocational baccalaureat as a complete success: numbers passing the exam have risen considerably, from 6,259 in 1988 (the first cohort) to 44,898 in 1992. Between 1990 and 1992 the proportion of pupils passing vocational baccalaureats in the age group almost doubled to over 5 per cent. All the available studies and statistics, despite the fact that they concern only the first relatively weak cohorts, indicate that employers have given an encouraging welcome to young people with the vocational baccalaureat.

However, some shadows are already appearing in the picture. Contrary to initial expectations, a significant proportion of young people with the baccalaureat do not enter working life directly but go on to higher education. Manufacturing occupations, which were originally intended to be at the heart of vocational baccalaureat streams, seem largely to have been ousted by service, and preponderantly female, occupations. Of the 25 vocational specialisations on offer in 1991, the "business computing" baccalaureate, including accountancy and management options, attracted almost half of all candidates (48 per cent, the proportion being higher among pupils in vocational lycées). The forecast of getting considerably more than 5 per cent of an age cohort to take vocational baccalaureats within a fairly short length of time is now contradicted by the fact that, just as before, on leaving college the vast majority of pupils capable of reaching baccalaureat level opt not for vocational lycées but for general and technological lycées.

4. Vicissitudes, risks and contradictions

Clearly, it is hardly possible to evaluate reforms on this sort of scale so recently after their introduction, especially as their success implies far-reaching changes in the attitudes of teachers, employers and the population in general, which were formed and took root in the post-war years on the basis of
massive social experiments and purely rational calculations of utility. A substantial proportion of the population, the teaching profession and employers would have to place less emphasis on the scramble for diplomas and regard the acquisition of practical skills and employment in operative or manual occupations as a genuine alternative to the more or less random pursuit of general studies. It would also imply, at an initial stage, interaction between the education system and employment structures, and subsequently the achievement of entirely new equilibria based on career plans, labour market networks and standards and human resource management strategies whose outlines are as yet barely perceptible, even in companies regarded as being in the vanguard of the movement. Such changes, on such a radical scale, will take longer than a few years to complete.

However, although it may be too soon to say whether the reforms have been a success or a failure, it is both possible and useful at this stage to point out a number of snags, problems and untoward side effects that have already become visible or discernible and that in some cases could and should be remedied without delay. We shall briefly consider three of these problems, which are or will be of relevance to all countries embarking on similar reforms of their vocational training systems.

a) The risk of slippage towards mainstream education

Education officials, together with a substantial slice of public opinion, consider that enhancing the status of vocational training is first and foremost a matter of education policy and educational reform. However, in a country where the vast majority of an age cohort stays in mainstream education well beyond the minimum school leaving age, limited improvements to vocational education per se, such as overhauling training streams and diplomas, reforming curricula or providing schools with more teachers and better equipment, are no longer sufficient. The decisive factor is the ability to change the status of vocational training within the education system as a whole and attract greater numbers of good pupils.

In France, efforts to improve the "competitiveness" of vocational training in comparison with general education have focused on two objectives:

-- overturning the "dead-end" image of vocational education by offering those in vocational streams (and apprenticeships wherever they still have some significance) the prospect of diplomas and educational levels that had hitherto only been accessible from the mainstream;

-- improving the status of vocational education and institutions through a set of measures ranging from changes in entry conditions to the status of teachers and the definition of criteria for success.

However, all reform along these lines seems to lead to a particularly awkward dilemma in vocational education, springing from the patent contradictions and incompatibilities between criteria for academic and professional success, capacities in terms of educational attainment and skills, and economic performance.

Acquiring the vocational skills required for future intermediate employment of a mainly operative nature implies a greater emphasis in curricula not only on technological knowledge but also on practical experience. Consequently, vocational training streams and institutions will either remain or become alien to an education system which can measure success only by its own values and criteria. The greater the
effort to bolster the position of vocational streams within the education system, the greater the risk of diluting the specifically vocational nature of courses in favour of a more general scientific approach.

There is a great danger that reforms designed to enhance the status of vocational education will either be brought up short or else set off a frequently repeated process in the history of European education, whereby the streams and institutions concerned lose their specifically vocational slant and become integrated, though still with a specific disciplinary bias, into mainstream education.

Recent developments in university institutes of technology (IUT), created in the 1960s with a distinct vocational orientation, provide a graphic illustration of this danger. Faced with a substantial rise in the number of applicants, doubtless reflecting the excellent image of their graduates in the intermediate professions, IUTs have been able to become more selective, a privilege which, in the French system, has always been reserved for the most prestigious higher education streams and institutions.

Three trends have appeared over the years which could gradually steer IUTs into the higher education mainstream (and perhaps even give them a rather privileged position):

a) Selection criteria have become mainly or even exclusively academic (ie, success in secondary education). Growing numbers of students in IUTs have passed the most prestigious baccalaureats and have chosen an IUT either because they have failed to get into a Grande Ecole or comparable institution or because they have decided not to try for one.

b) A growing number of IUT graduates continue their studies rather than enter working life. Clearly, this trend has been accentuated by the situation in the labour market and the risk that they may find themselves having to take first-time jobs that offer little security or for which they are over-qualified. However, it also corresponds to a shift in recruitment away from pupils passing technical baccalaureats, for whom the IUT were originally intended, to pupils with more selective mainstream baccalaureats, some of whom use it as a means for avoiding first-cycle university studies in which students are over-numerous and under-supervised.

c) There has also recently been growing pressure from IUTs to extend their courses by at least one more year. This would seem to be the logical consequence of the two trends already described; similar trends can also be observed in most industrial countries with specialist institutions offering initial training in "intermediate" occupations, reinforced by the European Union’s criteria for mutual recognition of higher education diplomas.

There would appear to be a growing awareness of this dilemma in France, explaining the attention being paid to a series of innovations intended to:

- enable those leaving school with a diploma at level IV (baccalaureat) or III (eg, BTS) to return to their studies or to study engineering while pursuing their professional activity (so-called "Decomps" engineers);
- create a new pathway to middle or intermediate vocational qualifications which combines classroom instruction with long periods of work experience.
Education policy options and initiatives alone are not sufficient to ensure the lasting success of such experiments or their ability substantially to improve the position of vocational education in relation to mainstream education. In all probability, it is not enough simply to give young people leaving vocational training courses the possibility of obtaining diplomas that are accessible directly through mainstream education. "Positive discrimination" in favour of those who have already acquired a practical skill will doubtless also be needed. The education system can contribute to this type of positive discrimination, for example when selection criteria for STS and IUT are being defined. But as long as there is no radical change in the rationale behind the education system in France (a highly unlikely circumstance), most initiatives must come from employers and their human resource management strategies. However, that is precisely where the other two serious obstacles to a lasting improvement in the status of vocational training are to be found.

b) Stymied careers

Following the pattern described earlier as the first model for the expansion of education, an implicit but extremely firm option was taken in France in the early 1960s: rapidly growing needs for intermediate qualifications, both in manufacturing and in modern service industries, would be met mainly through initial training. The number of Bac + 2 graduates increased almost fivefold between 1970 and 1990. At the same time there was a considerable expansion of higher education, especially in technological and business studies, intended mainly to meet the need for highly qualified labour.

As a result the French economy now has considerable, or more accurately young, stocks of labour with high level technical or business qualifications. It is true that employment prospects for this type of graduate are still much better than the average, which explains why there are so many candidates for such courses (and why the institutions providing them can afford to be so selective). But there have been a growing number of signs in recent years that, while the number of graduates has continued to rise, demand is flat or falling (at least temporarily) because companies are becoming slimmer and because retirement rates are low.

This produces two effects which combine and reinforce each other. First, young people are often over-qualified for the positions they occupy, at least in first-time employment; graduates at level III and higher are frequently taken on for positions which, only a few years ago, were exclusively filled by people with a significantly lower educational level. The trend is apparently common to both manufacturing industry and the service and administrative sectors. Second, the barriers to career advancement, which at an equivalent level of training had hitherto seemed assured, are increasing.

In this context it is difficult to see what the career prospects might be for young people leaving revamped higher status vocational streams, other than generally unappealing white and blue collar operative occupations, and even more difficult to see what could incite them to leave the education system and enter working life after obtaining their first diploma. If higher level diplomas continue to displace lower level diplomas, young people can hardly be blamed for wanting to stay in education until they reach the highest diploma possible.

The question remains of whether significant numbers of employers in France will succeed (for example, by adopting more "horizontal" career structures) both in freeing up promotion prospects for substantial numbers of highly qualified workers and in creating new systems within which new types of
career can flourish, in which continuing training plays a much more important role. However, this would appear to be a necessary precondition if the vocational training reforms of the 1980s are to enjoy lasting success.

c) The absence of possibilities for acquiring qualifications in most companies

The development of closer links between the education system and the productive economy, the growing number of work experience schemes and the introduction (still on a relatively modest scale) of alternation between education and work experience in vocational streams at different levels are doubtless the most important innovations by which an effort has been made in France to correct the imbalances induced by expansion focusing exclusively on mainstream education, the baccalaureat and higher education.

In practice, however, these initiatives come up against several often interrelated difficulties: it is not easy to organise work experience with a substantial educational content. Giving trainees the opportunity for real hands-on experience calls for facilities and measures that may cost rather a lot of money. Serious supervision makes considerable demands on people who, for obvious reasons, cannot be the company’s least skilled employees. There is also a definite risk that misunderstandings between schools and businesses will appear, because companies are looking to sandwich courses to provide a future workforce that will become rapidly effective, while teachers wish to use their pupils’ work experience mainly to back up and illustrate their own teaching. These difficulties may explain why the number of young people taking intermediate level sandwich courses (levels IV and III in French terminology) is so small, despite all that has been done to advertise them and make them popular.

In the light of the experience of OECD countries with a long and rich tradition of apprenticeship, this comes as no surprise. Efficient and profitable production is difficult to reconcile with teaching young people the rudiments of their trade, the knowledge and experience that they will later be able to develop on their own initiative (in day-to-day work or in continuing training) and adapt to new situations. Doubtless these problems are compounded by the fact that competition is fierce and that work is conditioned by modern technologies that are both abstract and vulnerable. Even in industries with a long tradition of apprenticeship, questions have recently arisen about the expense and profitability of this form of initial training.

French companies often have to start from scratch if they want to take an active part in the initial training of qualified blue and white collar staff, and the risks and expense involved in learning how to conduct apprenticeships are considerable. In many French firms, the ability to teach has never been and still is not an important or highly-valued quality among supervisory staff. On the contrary, supervisors used to try to keep important information and knowledge a secret, and often still do. The high degree of demarcation (vertical, as between supervisory and operative staff, horizontal, as between different operatives, and functional, as between production and services) that has traditionally existed in many French companies offers little opportunity for in situ learning and does little to stimulate the desire to learn. Furthermore, many teaching materials and techniques would have to be invented, developed and tested, in areas where the scientific foundations seem to be especially fragile. And so on.

All this applies almost as much to training per se as to the initiation of young people into their occupation, and the greater the scientific and technological content of their initial training, the longer it will take. It is to be hoped that the greater international openness emphasised in the background report, with
growing numbers of young people acquiring work experience in other European countries, especially through the efforts of the National Agency for Courses Abroad (ANSE), will help to improve knowledge of these matters.

d) By way of a conclusion: a genuine overhaul of vocational education and training presupposes a dual process of very long term change

With the creation of the vocational baccalaureat in particular, France has made a highly courageous move to halt the decline of traditional vocational training and to ensure, even within an education system that gives everyone a real opportunity to reach baccalaureat level, that enough young people with good academic and vocational potential opt, at least in the meantime, for vocational training in a practical occupation. It is in the interest of the other OECD countries, even those which correspond more to the second model outlined above and which still have apparently solid vocational training systems, to follow the French experiment closely.

However, both schools and employers in France must accept that it takes a lot of time and money to create a modern and efficient initial vocational training system. In the business and educational community alike, the necessary personal, organisational, behavioural and mental conditions cannot be introduced overnight, or even in a few years. Encouraging companies to take an active part in vocational training is not a means for reducing the strain on the education budget, nor should companies be expected to participate free of charge: it will require the rapid mobilisation of new funding or the redeployment of existing resources, such as revenues from the apprenticeship tax. It will take a long time, and some striking examples will be necessary, before parents, pupils, teachers and the vast majority of employers and personnel managers accept the new situation. Quick successes, like the highly favourable welcome given to the first groups of young people to pass the vocational baccalaureat, may be due to a novelty factor, and it is highly likely that disenchantment will frequently set in, either among the young or among their employers.

France’s ambition to create solid, effective and socially accepted vocational training systems alongside higher education necessarily calls for far-reaching changes both in the education system and in the structure of employment. These changes must be both consistent and well-coordinated.

Apparently France, like all other modern countries, does not at the present time possess the intellectual tools, in terms of research, analysis, study and planning, or the institutional resources to produce the necessary vision of the future within a broad social consensus, or to harmonise the fundamentally different approaches that determine reactions and change in the education system and economy. We shall return to the subject in the following chapter.

5. Some recommendations

Two types of action would seem to be necessary in order to ensure the lasting success of the modernisation and reform of the educational system undertaken in France since the 1970s and to solve the problems and overcome the contradictions outlined above. Their objective would be to enhance the status of vocational education and training within the education system and to help companies in their endeavour to boost their training potential.
a) Initiatives within the education system to enhance the status of vocational education and training

A first set of initiatives within the education system could and should help considerably to strengthen the relative position of vocational streams in school and university structures. All the evidence suggests that this cannot be done without substantially increasing their autonomy in the education system compared with traditionally more appealing and prestigious streams. Drawing inspiration from successes and failures in other OECD countries, there are a number of measures that France could and/or should take.

i) Giving vocational lycées and similar institutions greater autonomy

Giving vocational training institutions greater autonomy would be a logical consequence of the transfer of competence in vocational training matters to regional authorities and the growing importance accorded to partnership with the business community. Most importantly, it would be an essential condition for the success of all the other initiatives outlined below. Clearly, giving institutions greater autonomy will only be beneficial if it is matched by a substantial increase in the material resources and staff available to them.

ii) Developing specifically vocational teaching approaches

As a result of work in educational science in general and cognitive psychology in particular, considerable progress has been made in teaching, especially science teaching, in the last twenty or thirty years. However, in France as in most other industrialised countries, the teaching of the knowledge and skills central to vocational competence remains based on an empiricism which is all the more inadequate in that the traditions of conventional occupations (which were still sustained by empiricism even twenty or thirty years ago) have become more or less extinct.

Consequently, a thorough overhaul of vocational education and training calls for enormous investment in research and experiment. It is very difficult to give any forecast of the cost of such an enterprise because it will depend largely on the extent to which successful experiments and tried and tested programmes can be transferred from one occupation to another, factors about which very little is known even in countries with a strong vocational tradition.

iii) Creating a specific body of teachers for vocational education and training

A body of teachers of this kind should have a status of its own which systematically rewards professional experience acquired outside the education system and confers advantages ensuring that it is truly competitive in comparison with more conventional careers in business or public service. A specific training stream for future vocational teachers, separate and distinct from mainstream teacher training, should be introduced. Training should be at least open, if not restricted, to adults who have themselves learnt a trade and acquired considerable practical experience in that trade or in related activities.

Clearly, the content and general orientation of such a training stream for vocational teachers should be the subject of detailed scrutiny in relation to the experience and obvious shortcomings of the
former National Apprenticeship Colleges (ENNA) and the recently created University Teacher Training Institutes (IUFM), described in the preceding chapter.

**iv) Restricting certain level III and even level II streams to holders of vocational education or training diplomas**

Any significant enhancement of vocational streams necessarily implies far-reaching changes in the rationale and in the calculations of utility that increasingly govern attitudes towards education and educational choices. In the light of conclusive experience in other countries, influencing attitudes in favour of vocational streams means changing the conditions for access to certain higher education courses and institutes by giving clear or even exclusive priority to candidates from vocational streams. This form of positive discrimination in favour of vocational streams is easier to introduce for a whole series of "technological" courses, intended to train workers for "intermediate" industrial or administrative positions, but it could and should be subsequently extended to other types of training, by broadening and consolidating the training of so-called "Decomps" engineers, and even to more traditional higher education institutes.

All the evidence suggests that this is an essential precondition if France genuinely wishes to make vocational streams more "competitive" in relation to general and technological streams. The effects of giving holders of vocational diplomas preferential (or exclusive) access to higher education courses that are both appealing to students and valued by future employers could be considerably reinforced by combining the privilege with compulsory work experience.

**b) Initiatives to promote company involvement**

Clearly, any overhaul of vocational education and training at all levels will only succeed if employers assume their responsibility and take an active part. However, for very good reasons, some of which have been outlined above, this will not happen - or not with the required speed and intensity - unless substantial government support is forthcoming. Two types of initiative could be effectively combined.

**i) Pilot schemes to restore the status of the workplace as a place of learning**

The success of such pilot schemes, which will inevitably need to be on a relatively large scale, will depend on the following three conditions being met:

1. a formal and firm commitment from employers (or more accurately, from senior management and all the departments concerned);
2. substantial financial backing from the government, directly or indirectly covering a significant share of the additional costs incurred as a result of the scheme, especially the cost of prior consultation and research and support measures;
3. the active and ongoing involvement of researchers and/or consultants in preparing, monitoring and evaluating the scheme.
An ambitious programme of pilot schemes could draw on the results and methodological know-how of other forms of cooperation between government and industry, such as the activities of the National Agency for the Improvement of Working Conditions (ANACT). The apprenticeship tax, a considerable plus for France, could provide solid financial support once its present effectiveness has been clearly analysed and the decision has been taken to allocate it as a priority to courses alternating classroom instruction and workplace training.

ii) Expanding the provision of high quality, regularly assessed training for trainers

Any substantial increase in the capacity of French companies to provide both initial and continuous training depends very much on the number and status within the company of the people responsible for imparting knowledge and skills to other employees, whether explicitly in formal courses or, more frequently, implicitly as part of their work as supervisors, specialist quality or method technicians or tutor-colleagues.

Increasing available opportunities to "learn how to get others to learn" through various institutional channels could also make a very useful contribution to the rapid circulation of the results of the research referred to in paragraph a.ii) and of the pilot schemes mentioned above. Clearly, "working trainers" trained in this way could constitute a promising source of vocational teachers of the type described earlier.
V. HOW DOES ONE STRENGTHEN THE INNOVATIVE AND STRATEGIC PLANNING POTENTIAL OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND STRIKE A FRESH BALANCE?

Over the past two decades the education system in every OECD country has undergone radical change, either as a direct and intentional outcome or as an indirect and unintentional outcome of the major reforms of the postwar period. These changes, a number of which have been outlined very briefly and with the deliberate omission of all of the specific characteristics that stem from national differences, constitute a twofold challenge for education policy. On the one hand, they have been at the root of new problems the solution to which depends not only on education policy, even assuming that this could act in isolation, but also on co-operation with other policies such as, for example, urban policy or employment policy. Some of these new problems, which would seem to vary somewhat in intensity from one OECD country to another, have been highlighted in Chapters II, III and IV in which we have attempted to analyse and assess the potential value and limits of the solutions devised in France. On the other hand, in order to find valid solutions to these problems, what is being called for with increasing urgency is a new approach to education policy.

The thoughts and ideas set out in this final chapter will be focused primarily on this second challenge, that is to say what are the new instruments and methods which education policy needs to make use of in order to deal with these new problems; how should those decisions that are vital as regards education policy be prepared, adopted and implemented; and what are the preconditions for success -- in the institutional and academic areas, for example -- that need to be assured at the outset?

As in the case of the foregoing chapters, the comments on the specific situation in France will be preceded by a brief outline of the problem as a whole, which is likely to be common to most OECD countries.

1. The long tradition of ad hoc innovations against a background of structural stability

a) A practice that has been used for several decades

Not so long ago what was meant by a good education policy was first of all ensuring that the institutions functioned properly, in other words the quality of the teaching and the examinations, the competence of the staff and properly equipped schools and universities. Education policy and management of the education system were closely interwoven. Stable prospects and profound reliability were rightly considered to be essential prerequisites for any type of good quality education and training. Parents could be certain that their children’s life at school was not greatly different from theirs. And teacher training, for the most part, could quite naturally be based on the assumption that most of these future teachers’ educational know-how came from their own experience as schoolchildren: as a result, the formal training of future teachers could be confined to imparting a basic corpus of knowledge.
Under these conditions, "reforms" were virtually always ad hoc in character. The innovations introduced into the education system were, as a general rule, triggered off by obvious and clearly perceptible shortcomings and dysfunctionings that were already a subject of discussion in the current policy debate. Consequently, they concerned only isolated parts of the education system (e.g. the first primary grades or the final lycée grades). Their aim was to improve certain aspects or elements within the education process (e.g. knowledge of foreign languages or preparation for post-secondary education) in ways that were self-evident. The long-term stability of education structures and the ad hoc nature of these innovations conditioned and were mutually supportive of one another. On the one hand, even the boldest reformers could rest assured of the fact that, outside the immediate scope of these innovations, everything else would remain unchanged. On the other hand, these ad hoc innovations, occasionally triggered off by an overt crisis but, more often than not, carefully prepared and discussed at length, more reminiscent of the handiwork of a gardener than the skills of a surgeon and never calling into question the structures of education in their entirety, ensured a sufficiently swift adjustment of the institutions and the content of the education to the major trends in the development of society.

b) The new instruments of reform

The major reform movement that has dominated education policy in most OECD countries since the mid-1950s was obviously bound to go beyond the earlier practice of ad hoc innovations within what was otherwise a highly stable system. The ambitions of the reformers were precisely to renovate all of the structures of education as well as the quality of its "products" and could not be satisfied with merely minor improvements. These aims could not be achieved without the help of new instruments and procedures:

-- which explicitly situated at the centre of the debates and decisions the whole range of educational institutions and the entire teaching and student population;

-- which favoured not only stability but innovation to an equal degree.

As a result, the question of the instruments that a modern and reformist education policy should have at its disposal was discussed with as much concern and equally profoundly as were the more substantive issues.

These discussions came to focus on three potentially mutually supportive instruments:

-- educational research where the two centres of attention were, on the one hand, the pedagogical and educative processes and, on the other, the structures of education and their societal context (generating both the social demand for education as well as the economic demand for skilled labour);

-- pedagogical innovation, particularly via the updating of text books, better teacher training and curriculum development, thereby making it possible to put into practice the findings of educational research and, in return, supplying this research with new knowledge and new questions;

-- educational planning which, by putting into practice the essence of the research on the education system and its dynamics, and backed by solid and detailed statistical information,
would provide decision-makers with an accurate picture of the present state of education as well as forecasts that were as reliable as they could be.

In the 1960s and early 1970s all of the OECD countries, in many cases by dint of substantial financial outlays, endeavoured to create and refine these instruments. Admittedly, there were sharp differences between countries as regards the pace of this process and its particular emphasis: some placed more importance on promoting educational research whereas others concentrated on strengthening the planning capacity of their education authorities; some gave priority to developing new curricula and others to refining forecasting methods, etc. Nevertheless, the similarities were substantial, due largely to the strong influence of the OECD, particularly with regard to the improvement of education statistics, the development of planning and, to a lesser degree, pedagogical research.

c) Nonetheless, these instruments have had relatively little real impact

In retrospect, it has to be admitted that, on the whole, these innovations in the area of instruments and methods that were often embarked on with great hopes (or sometimes with serious misgivings) did not succeed in ousting once and for all the traditional practice of ad hoc and limited innovations nor in increasing substantially the strategic management capability of education systems. New institutions, created specifically to provide education policy with a brand new and "integrative" base that was both scientifically constructed and forward-looking have since completely vanished (in this connection, who does not recall the German "Bildungsrat" whose mandate -- after two highly-rewarding and productive periods of work -- was not renewed?) or have been absorbed within the traditional structures, either administrative or academic. The forecasts for enrolment or labour force requirements, whose shaky scientific foundations have often been condemned since the 1970s, now serve as little more than testimony of and an explanation for some of the pet concerns of education policy. The pilot experiments of new forms of educational organisation or educational practices during the period of these reforms, which were sometimes the target for very lively not to say heated debates, seem to have lost all of their attraction for teachers, parents and the education authorities. The conclusions drawn from educational statistics and research now no longer do more than attract public attention as facile slogans or for use in a debate on the effectiveness of education -- debates which can scarcely be regarded as expressing genuine educational concerns, but which are triggered off rather by short-term financial and budgetary pressures.

This gradual decline of the major instruments of educational reform is due to a series of factors that are chiefly the outcome of the virtually inherent cumbersomeness of vast structures such as the education system and of what can sometimes be very substantial opposition of a corporatist character. Due to the influence of these factors some of the constituent elements of the reforming visions of the 1960s have gradually been transformed into ad hoc reforms of the traditional variety that in no way require new instruments. However, the gradual decline of this reformatory set of instruments is no doubt also due to the fact that some of the major aims of this educational reform have to a very great extent been achieved and that, since the 1970s, the societal environment and the political climate are no longer in any way the same as those that prevailed during the postwar period and that gave rise to the major reforms of virtually all of the social institutions. The attainment of these reformist aims would appear to have led a good many decision-makers to place far less value on most of the instruments and methods developed or used to achieve these aims. In the new and present context that calls above all for a "restabilization" of all the educational structures, these instruments would at best be only of some help in managing the education system more effectively or in evaluating and improving its efficiency.
2. The need for strategic planning

However, a straightforward reversion to the traditional maxims and practices of education policy, the main concern of which had been to ensure stability and durability, would hardly seem feasible. To do this, following the success or the culmination of the major postwar structural reforms, the education system at the present time would have to be looking forward to a genuine and long period of both internal and external equilibrium. It is only on this condition that education policy, after the “activism” of the reform period and by reverting to a tradition tried and tested over many decades, could and should devote itself primarily to consolidating existing structures -- which would nonetheless not rule out possible recourse to ad hoc revisions and targeted improvements that were carefully thought out and prepared. However, there are strong reasons for believing that this condition is far from being met and that an education policy that put its faith in a straightforward return to traditional practices would be exposing itself to some very serious risks. Over the last 20 or 30 years fundamentally new configurations have emerged within the education systems and societies of all of the industrial nations. These configurations are the source of potent and not easily controllable tensions and imbalances, to contend with which what is called for more than ever is clearly an even greater capacity for innovation and strategic management on the part of education structures and education policy. This state of affairs has been brought about by two sets of factors: on the one hand, radical changes in the education system’s social environment which are reflected primarily in the vast majority of the population’s decisions and behaviour vis-à-vis the opportunities offered by education; and, on the other, the internal changes in educational structures that have considerably strengthened its “systemic” character.

a) Radical changes in the demand for education generating tensions and imbalances

The postwar reforms were closely connected with radical changes in the perceptions governing the demand for education and running through all of the strata of the population. Broadly speaking, these changes can be said to be due to the increasingly wider use of the principle of investment in human resources: one after the other the traditional approaches to educational and career decisions, which had hitherto been highly stable and largely determined by a person’s social background and economic constraints, are being replaced by individual decisions aimed at optimising the “rate of return” on the effort invested in different types of courses and qualifications, given the existing structures (and on the basis of what is never complete information). It goes without saying that such decisions can change quickly as the result of equally rapid changes in the situation. This trend as regards educational behaviour and decisions is not an isolated process but an integral part of the modernisation of society in terms of greater well-being, increased democratisation, the spread of more urban lifestyles and middle-class values and, in particular, of “economic” ways of thinking concerned with minimising the effort and maximizing the return from all of the activities of everyday life. This is why it is clearly pointless, when confronting a massive increase in the social demand for education, to discuss either bygone responsibilities or the possibility of reverting to these in the future.

In most of the industrialised countries this trend in educational behaviour, in the shape of an increasing individualisation of decision-making and the growing impact of economic considerations, seems still to be running its course, since it is the outcome of a social learning process of a type that normally lasts for more than a generation, given that parents, students and the social circle to which they belong have to learn:
-- what courses and qualifications are on offer;
-- what the costs and risks involved in these various courses and what the opportunities offered by these different qualifications are;
-- what should be, from the standpoint of optimising opportunity, the role of education and qualifications in constructing a career and in planning one’s working life;
-- how to assess and, if need be, promote and support a child’s educational abilities;
-- in short, what is the recipe for success within the education system.

No country can claim that all of its population, all of its parents and all of its children, have yet learnt all they need to know in order to make best use of the opportunities currently available from the education system. Consequently, the attraction of the courses and qualifications promising the highest benefits in terms of income, security, prestige and so on will not diminish in the future but rather continue to increase; likewise, educational behaviour, dominated by this search for the most profitable educational pathway will be subject to fluctuations of ever greater scope and rapidity. In other words, the demand for education has by no means reached a state of stability on which a new form of equilibrium, however impermanent, could be built.

A stabilization of the social demand for education (or at least the emergence of a clear trend underlying its development so that this can be forecast with some reliability) would seem to be highly unlikely, given that we are witnessing rapid, radical and not easily predictable changes at one and the same time in all of the parameters guiding a rational decision. This is true not only as regards the labour market and employment patterns, but also as regards the education system itself.

For one thing, ever since the end of the strong and virtually uninterrupted economic growth of the three golden postwar decades, patterns of employment have been undergoing radical change: increasingly serious under-employment, the decline of major traditional industries, the rapid advance of so-called "new" technologies, an ever-greater tertiarisation of the economy, etc. These changes have been causing sharp quantitative and qualitative fluctuations in the requirements for educated and trained (young) workers -- fluctuations on a scale that in many cases greatly exceeds those in the stock of labour that triggers these off. What is more, employers’ preferences as regards educational courses and qualifications are by no means stable. The value that recruiters place on a high standard of general education compared with more specialised vocational skills can change very rapidly. And in the case of most jobs there would appear to be no set rules regarding the choice between an applicant with the highest possible qualification (but with matching requirements and ambitions) and one with mediocre scholastic attainments but with more modest ambitions and willing to fit rapidly into an existing structure. This means that there is great uncertainty and variability in the opportunities afforded on the labour market by a given course or qualification, whereas it is precisely these opportunities that are increasingly being used as criteria in the choice of a school or university stream.

Secondly, in most modern countries it is very often a temptation to use education policy and the way education is administered to manipulate educational behaviour so as to spread the flows of students and undergraduates more evenly and make fullest use of available resources and existing intake capacities. Accordingly, access to streams that are particularly sought after, for the simple reason that employers rate
them highly, is made systematically more difficult by the introduction of additional requirements, changes in entrance examinations and extending the length of such courses; in many cases new "alternative" streams have been set up alongside existing ones. In this way the education system itself is continually modifying the basic parameters that condition a rational utilisation of the educational supply aimed at optimising opportunities. And it is not uncommon for the end effect of such action to be contrary to its original aims: making access to a particular examination more difficult may have the effect of considerably increasing its value on the labour market, which will inevitably result in increasing still further the demand for it.

It would seem fairly unlikely that these factors inside and outside the education system that are destabilizing educational behaviour will cancel each other out, thereby pushing the entire system spontaneously towards a new equilibrium by mechanisms similar to those operating on the market. Rather, it is far more likely that, without some continual process of planning education structures, such as student and undergraduate flows, that concerns itself with both the short and long term, these factors of imbalance will tend to reinforce one another, causing disruptions that are increasingly difficult to overcome.

b) The increasingly marked "systemic" character of education structures

These disruptions in the social demand for education and in the educational behaviour of the population are all the more dangerous by virtue of the fact that education structures have become over the last twenty or thirty years far more sensitive and vulnerable to external pressures and internal tension or friction. The education systems in the form that they were created in the 19th century and had retained, with the help of some minor modernisations, up until the mid-20th century were not "systems" in the strict sense -- as the background report from the French Government rightly points out. They consisted rather of a number of separate entities with their own institutions, their own streams and their own logic. These entities -- the most important being the primary school, the lycées, vocational education, the universities and the grandes écoles -- had their own staff, recruited and trained in a specific manner and coming in many cases from clearly separate social strata. They catered as far as possible for different clienteles from well-defined segments of society. And, as a general rule, they were separated from one another by barriers that were difficult to cross -- a fact that was strongly emphasized in the 1971 Examiners’ Report. One of the central aims of the postwar education reforms was precisely that of breaking down these barriers in the interests of greater social cohesion and integration.

However, from the viewpoint of education policy and management this segmentation of educational structures had certain major advantages. In particular, it meant that forces of change, tensions or conflicts remained almost always confined to the educational sub-unit in which they arose to begin with. Consequently, these sub-units could undergo substantial changes, either as the result of ad hoc reforms or in response to external influences, without the other sub-units being affected to any great extent. Thus, extending the period of compulsory education to 8 years affected only primary education and had no impact, over the short term, on the lycée or higher education; similarly, the introduction of modern languages into lycées and baccalauréat examinations concerned only the lycées and, to some extent, higher education.

One of the most important consequences of the major postwar reforms was the emergence of structures which, for the first time in the history of Europe, justified the description of education "systems", thereby becoming however much more sensitive to "systemic" destabilization processes. The barriers
between these education sub-units thus became far more permeable; changes and disruptions, which at first
sight concerned only certain clearly defined sections of education, were able to spread more or less rapidly
to many other parts of the education structure. Between virtually every sector and level of the education
system strong interactions began to occur that were the origin of serious and largely unprecedented
problems which education policy and management suddenly found itself having to deal with.

In this respect, the major problems are not to be found in the changes affecting school careers and
having a direct impact on the magnitude and direction of student flows -- and which more often than not
are the outcome of explicit policy aims. For example, it is obvious that the inflow into higher education
needs to increase to reflect the growing proportion of successful baccalauréat candidates within a particular
age group. The real problems stem from the side effects that such apparently obvious changes have. These
side effects are of a twofold character:

(1) Changes in certain parts of the education system, as a result of specific actions (either as the
outcome of reformist aims or in reaction to external pressures) or actions triggered off
spontaneously, can create scarcely predictable problems and a need for further intervention in
areas far removed from their original cause. For example, the rapid expansion of lycée-type
general education, which occurred as the result of considerable pressure from the social demand
for education, has had a substantial impact not only on the quantity but also on the quality of
student flows into traditional vocational education. Likewise, much easier access to higher
education has led to the gradual warning of the traditional mode of recruitment and training for
teachers of primary schools and beyond -- a mode of recruitment and training whose previous
attractiveness had lain in the opportunity for social promotion that it afforded to children from
humble backgrounds; it is clear that this could well produce, a generation later, profound and
totally unforeseen changes in the educational climate and pedagogical performance of these
schools.

(2) As we have said, these remote effects will often occur so long after the event as to mask
completely the relation of cause and effect. This is particularly true when the side effects of
apparently ad hoc changes go through several stages or phases and when the logical reactions of
students, teachers and/or the administrative authorities trigger off positive feedback which
accentuates rather than attenuates the original imbalances. This risk is increased by the fact that
such sequences of events often take a longer time to work themselves out than the few years
which comprise the usual timespan for major policy and administrative decisions.

c) The conditions for a new equilibrium

Irrespective of the fact that there is general support for the major postwar reforms and that the
desire at most is to make only minor changes to these, the conditions and configurations that these reforms
have given rise to confront education policy and management of the education system in the years and
decades to come with challenges, problems, risks of imbalances, destabilization and conflicts that traditional
methods and practices are unlikely to be able to cope with. In all probability, to deal with these challenges
education policy and management will need to progress simultaneously in two not easily reconcilable
directions:

(1) more effective forecasting and management of a long term dynamic and
more rapid response to new problems and needs.

The measures that need to be taken in both of these areas -- and which will not be easy to co-ordinate -- will without any doubt require major efforts not only of a technical but also of a substantive nature.

From the standpoint of the necessary approaches and instruments, the task will be twofold. On the one hand, education policy will need to equip itself with instruments that are capable of identifying at the earliest possible stage the disruptions, tensions and frictions that are likely to occur, which may arise either within the education system itself or within the social structures generating the demand for education and manpower requirements calling for a specific type of training. Most important of all is that education policy should learn to make effective use of the information produced by these instruments and within the context of a genuine strategic management of educational institutions and educational flows. On the other hand, the different parts of the education system will need to be able to react rapidly, and without undermining the stability essential to pedagogical situations, to the new requirements, constraints, opportunities and needs that often arise in what are typically local contexts and/or emerge initially solely at a local level. It is only if these two abilities exist in conjunction with one another that education systems will have a real chance of defusing sufficiently early such potential internal tensions and imbalances. And it is only in this way that education can gain sufficient influence over its social environment to prevent the emergence therein of disruptions that will be impossible to cope with once they have really begun to affect the education structures.

But it will need more than mere improvements in the area of forecasting and management for national education systems to be able to achieve a new and lasting equilibrium in which education becomes once again a factor of social stability and cohesion rather than developing into a permanent source of tension, unrest and conflict. No doubt the essential condition for this is that there should be a major social debate on the future of education leading to at least some broad agreement about the fundamental issues that are now becoming increasingly urgent, some of which are outlined hereunder.

Certain of these issues concern the role of education in society:

-- Is it possible permanently to reconcile the principle of equal educational opportunities with job structures and functions that are highly unequal and characterised by the juxtaposition of "intellectual" and "manual" tasks, of mental and physical abilities?

-- How can a situation be reached where the desires and abilities of all youngsters will be globally compatible with the jobs available and necessary for the survival and well-being of society, and in what ways could the education system contribute to this?

-- What could and should be the proportion of time devoted to education and training activities throughout an individual’s life?

Other issues are concerned with the internal structure and functioning of the education system:

-- How does one reconcile within the amount of time available for education -- which, in all likelihood, will be limited -- such different objectives as:

i) education in the true sense of developing an individual’s personality,
ii) the imparting of knowledge,

iii) the acquisition of vocational skills,

iv) the promoting of physical or artistic activities and

v) the development of citizenship and a sense of values?

-- What will be the most appropriate time and place for pursuing one or other of these objectives?

-- What will be the most suitable split(s) between initial and continuing education/training?

There is every reason to believe that, without a frame of reference based on some answers to certain key questions of this kind and broadly accepted by society as a whole, even the best management and planning instrument is likely to be of no avail.

3. The case of France: the weight of centralism

How is France reacting to this widespread problem of imminent instability? Is there a risk of this in France and, if so, in what form? What are the responses that France may have already come up with and what issues are still unsolved?

Having posed these questions, the first thing that springs to mind is the twin concept of centralisation/decentralisation. There is no questioning the fact that a feature of the French education system ever since the 19th century and up until quite recent times has been its particularly high degree of centralisation: a powerful administrative authority in Paris controlled virtually all its financial resources and its staff. All of the major decisions were taken within this central administration and/or its local agencies, from curricula and the content of examinations to the opening, closing or conversion of schools. It was from the centre that the daily life and functioning of thousands of public sector schools of every kind was monitored and governed -- either directly or through the intermediary of the academies. This centralist approach to the education system is profoundly rooted in French history. On the one hand, it is a direct manifestation of the widespread predominance of highly centralised state structures. On the other, it is the outcome of the fact that education and education policy were on more than one occasion in French history the subject of major political and even social conflicts, the result of this being that no national government dared to divest itself of its fundamental powers in the realm of education to the benefit of opposing social forces or forces that were simply difficult to control. It is not our intention here to recapitulate the long and wide-ranging debates on the subject of French centralism. Nonetheless, in order to appreciate properly the strategic potential of the French education system, it would be difficult to avoid mentioning a certain number of salient points.

a) A substantial strategic potential ...

For one thing, there is no denying the substantial strategic potential inherent in the high level of centralisation of French education policy. The history of education in France is full of examples of radical
reforms that have been considerably facilitated, not to say simply made possible, by the highly centralised nature of decision-making powers and resource management. The establishment of the University Teacher Training Institutes and the introduction of vocational baccalauréats, which are dealt with in Chapters III and IV of this report, are highly convincing testimony of this. And if France is compared with other countries of a similar level in terms of industrialisation and modernisation, there is a clear and close correlation between the degree of centralisation of France’s education policy on the one hand and, on the other, the particularly rapid pace of expansion of both secondary and post-secondary education since the 1950s.

What is clearly essential in this connection is the principle of the homogeneity of education structures throughout the country as a whole. This principle, which since the Revolution has constituted one of the most important justifications for centralism, has had two major effects. Firstly, it ensures rapid and widespread implementation of reforms: for example, in the space of a few years France was able to set up hundreds of educational priority areas and sections leading to a vocational baccalauréat. Secondly, it ensures that, even in an education system that is undergoing rapid change, differences between regions, neighbourhoods and types of institution do not exceed certain critical limits.

b) ... But also a number of obvious shortcomings

Coupled with the strategic forces that are inherent in highly centralised structures are a number of obvious shortcomings which in many cases are themselves a direct outcome of this centralisation. It is perhaps worth mentioning briefly four of these.

One of the shortcomings is the cumbersomeness and inertia that seem to be virtually unavoidable defects of an organism of this size. For instance, reforms of a very positive nature are often thwarted by the continued existence of very ancient structures such as, for example, the compartmentalisation of the various categories of teachers who differ radically not only in terms of their skills profiles (sometimes even despite their genuinely standard training) but also in terms of their professional leanings, social origin and career ambitions. The saying “wait until things reach crisis proportions”, which reflects the belief that major innovations are feasible only when matters have reached a critical stage, aptly sums up this shortcoming.

A second shortcoming could be described as the danger of a "technocratic delusion", that is to say the decision-makers at the top of a strongly hierarchical structure may consider themselves able to identify at a sufficiently early stage and genuinely solve all the key problems within the education system by relying on a somewhat simplistic view of the situation based on one or two statistical indicators and/or the everyday experience of one or two people. This danger of technocratic delusion is heightened by two other shortcomings that could, in rather simple terms, be described as the "domestication" of the social environment in its relationships with education and the undue politicisation of educational problems.

The more centralised an education system is, the more the Ministry of Education through its influence and its approach will dominate all of the relationships between education and its social environment from the parents and pupils themselves, the local and regional officials right up to the future employers of these children. And there is the great danger of these partners of the education system submitting, often without realising it, to its material, institutional and intellectual influence by incorporating into their own outlook the vision and the approach of the education system and by formulating increasingly in line with this educational approach their own needs and interests that they ought however to be defending.
vis-à-vis the Ministry of Education. One highly characteristic manifestation of this shortcoming is the completely natural way -- and one that it is very difficult for a foreign observer to understand, despite the fact that France is not an isolated case in this respect -- in which most French employers define their manpower requirements not in terms of the organisation of work and job content but by using the criteria whereby the education system classifies and categorises its students. Thus the education system is likely, because of its own powerful influence, to conceal systematically the tensions and conflicts -- which exist already or are about to emerge -- in its relationships with its environment, despite the fact that an imperative requirement for any form of strategic management of this system is that these should be identified as early as possible.

What is more, another of the dangers inherent in the highly centralised character of the education system is that decisions can become the subject of fierce political debate, despite the fact that, because of their very nature, they necessarily call for painstaking preparation, taking into account a complex series of factors and considering objectively all of the possible options. The fact that such decisions are in the end taken in response to the pressure exerted by public opinion or become a central issue in electoral campaigns means that, to begin with, complicated problems with multiple ramifications are reduced to simple slogans. But the most important drawback is the danger of "short-termism", that is of considering within the narrow timespan of a four or five-year parliamentary term changes in the education system which have necessarily to be viewed over a far longer period -- particularly since education is a long process and the effects of decisions on education policy do not make themselves felt until ten or twenty years after those pupils or students have entered working life.

It goes without saying that the four drawbacks outlined above can combine in different ways: it is likely that a genuine crisis is necessary in order to trigger off the necessary changes, given that the organisational cumbersomeness of a highly centralised education system tends to make it slow to react and given the serious likelihood of an incomplete and/or belated realisation of the unrest within the social environment. And the more a crisis becomes necessary in order to get things moving, the more likely it is that these education problems will be debated within the political arena and that the politicians will be tempted, if not obliged, to simplify these problems in order to gain favour with their electors.

4. The risks of decentralisation

Given the drawbacks and the risks stemming from this high degree of centralisation, it is not surprising that, in all of the discussion of the operation of the education system in France, measures to decentralise this should have been increasingly considered as unavoidable. As a result, since the end of the 1970s the government and the administrative authorities have relieved the central administration in Paris of a whole series of powers and the process of decentralisation is already well under way. Three major measures are worth mentioning in this connection:

-- First, the granting of greater autonomy and responsibility to institutions and secondary schools in particular in order, on the one hand, to encourage initiative on the part of school heads, teachers and parents and, on the other, to enable schools to take greater account than in the past of conditions, problems and also the opportunities available locally; a good illustration of this approach has been the "school working plan";
-- Second, the transfer of powers to the academies (the decentralisation of ministerial services) which, as a result, are no longer simply the executants of orders received from the centre and which have been assigned certain resources and certain decision-making powers -- albeit within what are still fairly narrow limits;

-- Third, the transfer of decision-making powers and resources to local authorities, which have not only seen a gradual increase over the years in their responsibilities as regards school infrastructure and its maintenance, but more recently have been assigned genuine powers with respect to the planning of school development as well as adult vocational education and training (particularly in the case of the regions).

It is more than likely that these developments have triggered off a dynamic of educational decentralisation which has by no means yet come to an end: it will need some time before regional and local authorities, their elected representatives as well as those services which in some cases have only been recently created, learn exactly just what powers of action they have and what challenges they have to contend with. It will be only as the regions begin to define and implement their own educational plan that they will start calling for an active partnership between schools and the academy authorities, etc.

However, decentralisation may be a necessary prerequisite, but it certainly is not the only one, for overcoming the strategic obstacles stemming from a high degree of centralisation. It would be a mistake to place too much hope in a simple redistribution of powers, responsibilities and resources. For one thing, it has to be emphasized that the dead weight of a long tradition of centralism still exists. The centre may even react by creating new instruments such as, for example, nationwide systems of evaluation which, in theory, ought primarily to serve as benchmarks for regional and local authorities and/or to ensure a minimum of common standards throughout the country. However, what needs stressing above all is the fact that the French education system has need of still further innovations in order to prevent decentralisation from weakening rather than strengthening its strategic management potential. These additional innovations will perhaps be even more difficult to achieve than a genuine and viable form of decentralisation. Probably the most important of these innovations would be the development of a meaningful and global "project" setting out the key parameters for the future shape of the education system which would be not only acceptable but also feasible.

Any decentralised education system in which major decisions are no longer taken at central level but at regional and local level calls for a frame of reference that is common to all concerned. In a stable situation, the principles underlying the system of education in France, as listed at the end of the introduction to the Background Report from the French Government, constitute perfectly adequate guidelines. However, when faced with the dangers of systemic imbalances described earlier, with which the education system in every modern country has to contend, either now or certainly in the future, it is essential that the action and decisions of regional and local actors are in tune with a vision of the future that is both more detailed and more dynamic so as not to accentuate these imbalances.

Such a vision of the future state of the education system, defining the primary functions and the manner of operation of every part of the system, the relationships between these parts and relationships with the social environment, has to be the outcome of a wide-ranging debate at national level, culminating in a solid nationwide consensus. It will be no easy task to initiate and nurture such a debate, and to coax it into a national consensus based on firm principles rather than on hollow compromises. Moreover, it will
require no mean effort to create the institutional, cognitive, material and physical conditions needed to carry out this task. Three of these essential conditions are outlined hereunder:

(1) A prime requirement is a systematic analysis of the functioning and the dynamic of the education system and the societal structures of which it forms part. This analysis will certainly need to go very much further than the piecemeal research and studies currently undertaken by the central authorities, by specialised institutes and agencies and by the universities. What is required are new studies of a scope and depth such as are encountered nowadays only in a very few cases. The problem will above all be that of overcoming the high and very impermeable barriers that exist between the different disciplines concerned, from that of educational psychology to macroeconomics, and to reconcile the theories and methods of each of these. The much vaunted but rarely achieved interdisciplinarity is not so much a matter of the goodwill of the specialists, but more a question of organising the research and the resources it can call upon;

(2) Another essential requirement is a dense, active and multidirectional network linking the various actors and decision-making centres upon which the future of the education system depends. Horizontal structures of this kind for the purposes of co-operation and discussion are not created at the drop of a hat -- as is borne out by the efforts currently being made in this respect by major multinational businesses and under conditions that are far more favourable. The emergence and consolidation of such structures require very careful husbanding by education policy, particularly at the stage where the activity of these networks begins to constitute a serious challenge for the central administration;

(3) Such networks can only function properly, that is to say promote and disseminate innovations, if they are underpinned by a common culture of consultation and negotiation that gives all of those involved the assurance of being able to accept compromises without having to sacrifice any of the essentials. Throughout the long tradition of centralisation in France, the constituent elements of such a culture of consultation and negotiation have had little chance to develop. What is more, it is very likely that the development of such a culture will reinforce existing social and regional disparities, at least for some time to come.

It is not part of the examiners’ remit to speculate about the chances that France has of creating in the near future the necessary conditions for an educational policy capable of coping with the problems that lie ahead. What they can do, however, is to indicate a number of measures that the French Government might take to increase its chances of success.

5. Some recommendations

In order to increase the strategic planning capacity of its education system to any degree, France has clearly to take action in four directions: a) aimed at society as a whole, b) aimed at the system itself in both the educational and administrative areas, c) aimed at the new partners of this system at the local and particularly regional level and d) aimed at the community of specialists interested in the problems of education.

a) Action aimed at society as a whole
As the first direction for this action, what this would involve would be ensuring, however difficult the circumstances might be, that education policy is of a high quality. In a country like France, where long-term strategic vision has to be reconciled with short-term tactical adjustments, education and training policy is caught between several stools:

i) The political constraints stemming either from the democratic legitimacy of a government majority or from the timetable for forthcoming elections;

ii) The far less inhibited action of organised groups of persons within an increasingly multifaceted society and anxious to assert their rights as citizens;

iii) The impact of the mass media which, every day, mould and modify the socio-political environment;

iv) The influence of the authorities (central, regional, local) and, more broadly, of the bureaucracy who scrutinise the visions of the future and work out their own approach;

v) The feasibility assessments that take into account a whole set of considerations regarding the resources available, the timescale for action, the instruments for bringing about change and the opportunity costs.

The framing of public policy has become a difficult balancing act, which is no longer the preserve of one or two specialists at the higher administrative or policy-making levels, but rather something which is of concern to society as a whole. In order that education policy and the problems it has to face should be reinvested with the importance they deserve, France would be well advised to initiate a major nationwide debate on the possible and desirable directions that the education system should take in the future. In order that this debate on the key educational issues should emerge from the somewhat closed circle of technicians and experts, and that it should tackle the real problems and culminate in a genuine social consensus similar to the solid consensus that was reached on the postwar reforms, what is called for is:

-- a major effort to mobilise abilities and ideas;

-- the providing of platforms for open and independent debates;

-- the creation, outside of the administration (and modelled on the structures that were set up in certain of the OECD countries during the 1960s), of a workable infrastructure from both the material and organisational standpoint for discussion and obtaining expert advice.

It is extremely probable that an effort of this kind, undertaken in a country like France, would quickly have repercussions in other OECD countries, thereby imparting to the debates on education the international dimension that is increasingly coming to characterise the present-day and future issues in the field of education and training.

b) Aimed at the education system itself
A second direction for this action would be to strengthen the education system’s potential for strategic innovation and management. Such action would have three different aims:

i) To reinforce and broaden the moves towards transparency and evaluation that have been undertaken over the last ten or so years and make sure that the results of these have a greater influence on education policy and management;

ii) To increase the intensity of the process of discussion and review within the education system, for example through:

-- the creation of a higher institute for education, similar to the Ministry of Defence’s Institute for Higher Studies;

-- more effective use of the experience and skills of the central inspectorates;

-- the creation and mobilisation of existing "skill centres" at national and particularly regional level (such as, for example, some of the University Teacher Training Institutes);

iii) To develop a "softer" and more progressive methodology as regards innovation and experimentation with respect both to teaching content (curricula) and methods and to educational streams and structures; this methodology would be characterised by gradual, controlled and easily reversible approaches; it would be enhanced by frequent use of partnerships with regional and local authorities, associations and businesses.
c) Aimed at the system’s new partners

As the third direction for this action, this would be to promote the setting up and gradual strengthening of networks linking regional and local actors. The main purposes of such networks would be to:

i) Facilitate the ("horizontal") transfer of experience and knowledge, and the pooling of expertise and survey and research capacity;

ii) Increase the mobility of experts and the circulation of ideas;

iii) Utilise, harmonize and even combine the action and resources of the various school support structures at national, regional and local level, ranging from the expertise of the University Teacher Training Institutes and the various local inspectorates and educational advisers to the specific programmes forming part of urban and employment policies.

Clearly, these networks would eventually form a kind of "counterbalance" in the development of education, possessing genuine bargaining power vis-à-vis the central authorities -- this being an essential prerequisite for the acquisition by all the parties concerned of an ability to participate actively in reaching compromise solutions and indeed consensuses.

d) Aimed at the community of specialists interested in the problems of education

As the fourth direction for this action, this would involve seeking and sustaining on an ongoing basis systematic and independent research and thinking on the present state and future of education in France and even beyond: for example, on the issues that will need to be faced, the challenges that will need to be dealt with and the resources that are available or need to be mobilised. The potential as regards educational research, despite a number of outstanding projects that have been carried out, would seem to be largely insufficient to cope with the new demands being made on it. In particular, the researchers involved on a more or less ongoing basis in conducting research on the functioning of the education system and its relations with the socio-economic environment are not very many in number and could find themselves in a position, from a professional standpoint, that does not always provide them with a guarantee of genuine independence vis-à-vis the influence of the Ministry of Education which is very often the sole commissioning agent and source of funding for this research.

The fact is, however, that without high quality research, the independence of which is unquestionable, it will be impossible to launch and, more importantly, to sustain the major nationwide "productive" debate on education that was referred to earlier, since only research of this kind is capable of:

i) Alerting at a sufficiently early stage the public at large and the decision-makers;

ii) Raising the level of the debates beyond that of simplistic slogans or purely technical details;

iii) Initiating, supporting and evaluating experiments, which are the essential foundation for any innovation strategy;
iv) Paving the way for the consensuses and the inevitable compromises.

Creating a research potential that is adequate in terms of both quality and quantity requires time: it means attracting top quality young and up-and-coming researchers. It means creating efficient structures that are not only firmly rooted in the traditions of the different disciplines but also fully receptive to the new ideas and issues that more often than not are cross-disciplinary in character. It means that career paths and appropriate incentives have to be developed so as to guarantee both the genuine independence of the research and a profound -- rather than simply a fleeting -- involvement of the researchers in the issues and aspects that are essential to any education policy. The present state of research and its capabilities together with its more flagrant shortcomings and the areas as yet unexplored could be audited and the findings incorporated in a report that, for example, would serve as a basis for discussion at a national convention, lead to the setting up of a "brains trust" and give rise to research activities not only at national but also international level.