



Career and educational guidance policies

In France, educational guidance has a bad press: it is still perceived as a set of procedures which aim to restrict the initiative and choices of pupils and families in favour of a management-type logic which controls and plans flows of pupils through the educational system. The procedure that one would like to imagine as being negotiated on a tripartite basis (pupils and parents; form tutors and teaching staff; guidance practitioners), under the arbitration of the school principal, seems to be a shaky one.

Added to this subordination to what schools have to offer and to pupils' results, still a meaningful one despite the 1989 education act, is the cleavage between training and employment: using employment to drive guidance is today perceived as unrealistic, in a social and economic context in which career paths are less and less predictable. In parallel with this, school democratization is not keeping its promises: 80 000 people are leaving school without a higher education diploma and job insecurity is growing. It is only necessary to (re)read Stéphane Beaud's, *80% au bac... et après ?* (2002), or Marie Duru-Bellat's *L'inflation scolaire* (2006) to be convinced of this. But this question of failure at university level should not be allowed to mask a phenomenon that is at least as worrying: school-leavers with no qualification at all number between 110 000 and 170 000 depending on how the figures are calculated (Dubreuil *et al.*, 2005).

As is the case with [Afterschool tutoring](#), the private sector makes use of weaknesses in the public model, and in particular of the fact that different school paths work in isolation from each other. While all studies stress the need to develop partnerships, any form of collaboration between the institution and other networks, whether these be public or private ones, seems to be difficult to implement. Similarly, now that paths through the two-cycle degree structures from the Bologna process have become more flexible, that training is becoming increasingly international, that arrangements have been made to encourage worker mobility and that professional experience can be counted towards a diploma, the way is clear for new areas of competition in which guidance becomes a strategic issue for those involved in training and employment, with the prospect of being able to benefit from lifelong training.

These difficulties are not restricted to France alone: a number of countries have, over the last few years undertaken makeovers of the way in which their guidance services are organised and operate. Internationally, agencies such as the OECD and the CEDEFOP (European centre for the Development of Vocational Training) are attempting to promote quality standards and new tools for career guidance, initiatives which aim not so much to reduce inequality as to recognise skills on a lifelong basis.

The key role of guidance in the area of public policy needs no restatement: national objectives in terms of lifelong learning, social integration, regulating the labour market and economic growth all have to do with guidance (OECD, 2004 ; Sultana, 2004). More specifically, "the term "information, guidance and counselling services" refers to services intended to assist individuals, of any age and at any point throughout their lives, to make educational, training and occupational choices and to manage their careers" (CEDEFOP). Such services, both public and private, should, according to the CEDEFOP meet with the needs of individuals, society and the economy.

Whilst this "lifelong guidance" ought to make it possible to take the drama out of "the first pathway chosen", the underlying logic of streaming strongly condemns those who are sent down first one pathway, then another. The temptation to view guidance as a palliative for pupils with learning difficulties remains a strong one: pupils who continue along general educational paths cannot be said to be "guided" in the strict sense of the term. And it is not so much a question of attempting to achieve a purely formal egalitarianism as of making sure that there is a certain fairness in the guidance services on offer.

All these changes weaken public policy, so great is the extent to which a true makeover of guidance would require a global strategic vision to be conceived, and this would be likely to affect the very forms of organisation of school ... and university. Between "educational" guidance, often the slave to the pupil's results, and "career" guidance, dominated by the uncertain, what stance should one take? Between streaming that one undergoes and guidance in which one plays an active role, how can a balance be struck which would reconcile the logic which is proper to the system and that of individuals? Between qualification and integration, knowledge and skill, what should the school's mission be?

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Institutional logic and individual logic: the difficulty of finding common ground

Some common issues for different national systems

According to Jean-Pierre Cartier, guidance is based on different kinds of logic (in Odry, [2006](#)):

- a *streaming* logic, embodied by allocation procedures (also called *transition*) ;
- *counselling*, which aims to accompany guidance or integration approaches and to help people to solve personal problems by means of individual meetings, aptitude tests and psychological appraisals;
- educational and vocational guidance which aims to make career choices, decisions about the choice of education, and managing educational and professional transitional periods easier to make / perform objectively via the development of skills for lifelong guidance.

To these three kinds of logic one must add the logic of the people involved. According to Jacques Sénécat (in Odry, [2006](#)), guidance hinges on both the pupil's individual approach, encouraged as he is to understand the personal, educational, social and economic considerations of his choice, and the approach of the institution whose aims involve both adapting training to employment characteristics and ensuring that fairness is preserved. Performing this balancing act presupposes that pupils and their families have greater margins of freedom and that the pupil really is supported as he builds his project within the restrictive framework of the institution. Although guidance education partly answers these issues, it does not free the institution from the obligation of introducing more flexibility into courses to allow for decisions about what educational path to follow to be made later and to change those decisions.

These different kinds of logic are related to issues about which there is a relative amount of agreement, according to John Mc Carthy (in Cuisinier *et al.*, [2004](#)): investing efficiently in education, meeting with the needs of the market, developing learning on a lifelong basis, fighting exclusion and encouraging social justice. But stating these great principles is not enough to hide major national disparities, concerning both the organisation of guidance systems and the type of people involved, the means of funding, how professional the practitioners are, the type of action carried out, and the public targeted.

The OECD [report](#) (14 countries, including 9 EU member States) on public career guidance policies ([2004](#)) and the complementary [report](#) by the CEDEFOP (29 European countries) on the challenges of guidance in the knowledge society ([Sultana, 2004](#)) nevertheless do point to a certain amount of common ground as far as the difficulties encountered are concerned: a lack of coherence and coordination in services, weak partnerships, the balance of action tilted in favour of populations in difficulty, inadequate assessment and cost / profit analysis, a lack of visibility concerning the services for the user, and a lack of maturity of the systems permitting lifelong training. To gain an idea of thinking currently in progress in European countries on educational and career guidance, issues [59](#) and [60](#) of the review *L'Indécis* can also be consulted.

Inadequate national management

A great many reports have looked at these questions of guidance in France over the last three years. They all fail to mention, or dismiss outright, the role of guidance practitioners and guidance education, and they all agree as to the failure of national management, with the recurrent idea that reforms begun have remained unfinished. The only positive action by the authorities which has affected these practitioners for the last half century seems to have been to nominate them as "guidance counsellor psychologists" in 1991, a measure which meant a change of status and which led to the creation of a new State diploma requiring a three-year university course in psychology. This measure was highly praised by the French association of psychological guidance counsellors ([ACOP](#)). The complete decentralisation of services planned by the government in February 2003, came to a sudden halt, and the information and guidance centres (CIO) suffer from a lack of structure at national, academy and local level, and from a lack of visibility within the educational institution, both from the standpoint of the decision-makers and from that of the public, according to the inspectors' report which came out in 2005 (IGEN/IGAENR, [2005](#)).

We should first go back to the year 2004, with the publication of a report entitled *L'évaluation de l'orientation à la fin du collège et au lycée : Rêves et réalités de l'orientation*. Maryse Hénoque & André Legrand ([2004](#)) give a very lucid analysis of the joint failures of the education system and guidance policy, particularly the lack of indicators, the absence of interplay between national objectives and what people do locally, and the inexistence of effective tools. They denounce the dominance of (educational, or even disciplinary), criteria founded on school achievement or school subject in decisions to direct pupils and the omnipotence of teachers' judgement via school councils (staff meetings, at which delegate pupils and parents are present, to discuss the progress of class members). They express the opinion that the education act of 1989 lessened in appearance only the preoccupations related to the management of school flows by bringing centre stage the pupil's "personal project", without taking the necessary steps to allow the said project to be constructed and taken into account.

André Legrand's conclusion in the *Revue internationale d'éducation* ([2005](#)) makes no concessions: "It appears that the administration of the national education system has progressively pulled out of the game, while at the same time the development of decentralisation and devolution were strengthening the autonomy of local players, and guidance services were thrown out to the edges of the system. Because of this, the inevitable malfunctioning of the streaming process was all too readily put down to the lack of realism or irrationality of choices expressed by the families, or to the guidance services, henceforward accused of being too involved with psychological considerations and out of touch with the economic and social world".

Faced with this unfinished political arbitration, Claude Thélot, in his programme of action for the success of all pupils ([2004a](#), chapter 3), makes a plea for guidance to be remedied by default, by helping pupils to build an enlightened project. His recommendations deal with setting up, as of the start of secondary school (*collège*), a "guidance council with a broader mission-

base and membership which would decide on the direction to be taken by the pupil mainly according to his project" and creating a "new, individualised school record card, presenting both the pupil's educational project and his results as regards that project". Whether this system works depends on two prior conditions: redefining the curricula of the *lycée*, especially the *lycée professionnel* (for vocational training), and educating pupils to make informed choices. Finding a compromise between the projects of the young people and their families, school results, job opportunities and existing training courses also implies greater flexibility of training available at regional and local levels and making it easier to change tracks or to undergo such changes.

The class council as a chamber for recording teachers' decisions

Bernard Desclaux & Jacques Vauloup (in Odry, [2006](#)) remind us that the decree of 1990 situates the class council as an authority for making proposals, the final decision on the pupil's educational path belonging to the school principal. If this does not comply with what the families want, the principal must initiate a dialogue to reach a negotiated decision; following this meeting the families may start an appeal procedure. In reality, it is the teachers who have the decision-making power, the principal refraining from intervening so as not to be seen to be at odds with his teaching staff. Pointing, on the one hand, to the many paradoxes that cloud the dialogue procedure, and on the other, to the weight of directives from the academy as to how allocations should be made, the authors denounce the increasing bureaucratization of the class council, its ritualization that flies in the face of any communication, and all that goes unsaid concerning the conservation of teachers' power, in a system in which assessment of learning and measurement of performance which form the basis of streaming are confounded and placed in the hands of these same teachers.

This discrepancy between what is written in official documents and what is actually done is also underlined by Virginie Calichio & Béatrice Mabilon-Bonfils in their work on the class council ([2004](#)). These mostly serve only to record decisions taken when pupils and parents are not present, and are like a simple procedure made up of superficial discussions in a place where the teachers form a single body in order not to show up their differences of opinion. The rituals are organised so as to hide conflicts, thereby preventing the dimension of social awareness which should prevail in the class council from taking shape.

As it operates today, the class council is the outcome of a set of selection procedures that generate a strong feeling of injustice. In a group of pupils starting secondary education in 1995, Jean-Paul Caille ([2005](#)) shows that guidance at the end of Key Stage 3 and at the beginning of Key Stage 4 is something that is perceived as being undergone rather than chosen for four young people out of ten. Less than half feel that they had been properly informed by teachers and guidance counsellors. Almost a quarter of them feel that they do not have a good enough level for their wishes in terms of schooling. Of the 27 % who were refused their desired school path, one out of three felt that the decision of the class council was unfair. This feeling of injustice, which was more noticeable for pupils directed along technological or professional paths, is also more marked in immigrant families from North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

According to Bernard Desclaux and Jacques Vauloup (in Odry, [2006](#)), renovating the class council would require the following points to be taken into consideration: making the council an effective part of the proposal process; restoring the pupil and his family to their rightful place, by introducing self-assessment and co-assessment, for example; organising class councils around specific, cross-disciplinary objectives; giving better attention to what is said and allow discussion.

Quality standards and partnerships: modernising systems

For the OECD and the CEDEFOP, adopting quality standards and contractual, or partnership-based approaches are deemed to be indispensable for the renovation of guidance services and for guidance counsellors to become more professional. The [Draft resolution](#) adopted by the Council of Europe in May 2004 paves the way for European actions in favour of lifelong guidance. According to Normand & Cheynet ([2007](#)), these organisations attempt to promote a new form of governance of educational and professional guidance, inspired by the field of management and highlighting professional guidance techniques: transformations which seem to call on European regions to play an increasing role in modernising existing systems, as can be seen in the Leonardo project to which they have contributed.

The emergence of quality standards

A group of experts from the European Commission on lifelong guidance was formed under the supervision of Jennifer Wannan & John McCarthy, to give thought to the quality of guidance procedures and to offer decision-makers and practitioners some common reference tools (cf. [appendix](#)); but these tools are more in keeping with professional guidance and integration tools than with an educational approach. The pages devoted to "Guidance" on the CEDEFOP site give an on-going account of the work of this group of experts.

Although on-line information has considerably grown (cf. [ONISEP](#) in France), multidimensional systems which offer a synergic approach involving training, professions and data about the labour market are few and far between; in addition, quality standards in the field of information production are lacking in most countries. In the USA, the *National career development association* ([NCDA](#)) was one of the first to draw up standards for printed documents, videos, software and internet sites about guidance. In Australia, the *National Career Information Service* (NCIS) opened a [complete service](#) for professional exploration and information. In the area of practitioner professionalisation, several countries have drawn up skills databases: the [Canadian Standards and Guidelines for Career Development Practitioners](#); the professional standards of the *Employment national training organisation* (ENTO) in the UK for the guidance professions ([counselling](#) and [advice and guidance](#)); the work of the *Council for accreditation for counseling and related educational programs* ([CACREP](#)) in the US. As far as services proper go, the UK offers a matrix made up of 8 elements (four relating to the service offer and four to how this is managed), [Matrix quality standards for information advice and guidance services](#), acting as both accreditation for the service-providers and, more globally, for improving the quality of service.

New room for competition

In France, the public educational and vocational guidance system is discredited both inside and outside the *Éducation nationale* (national education system). While the regional Councils, since the laws on devolution, now have competence in the areas of training, integration and employment, the French national education is struggling to modernise its services, and actions carried out in schools and universities remain difficult to discern and are largely unassessed. Part of this inertia is due to re-

sistance from those involved: the proposal to transfer CIO's to the regions in 2003 met with stiff opposition from guidance practitioners, before finally being dropped.

According to Normand & Cheynet (2005), the shift from the notion of equality to that of fairness is at the heart of this modernisation: "*Making a break with a universal, neutral and undifferentiated approach, guidance should come closer to project-based management, with priority objectives, assessed results, and in keeping with network management principles which aim first of all at service effectiveness and performance*". The perspective of lifelong guidance stresses an active kind of guidance, opposed to the bureaucratic model of educational guidance, which takes as its starting point the social and professional interests of the person.

The inspectors' report on how information and guidance systems operate (2005) recommends that the administrative organisation of the CIOs be included in the partnership between the state and the local authorities, by creating regional public establishments managing network restructuring at regional level (based on the model of the local public learning establishments, or EPLE's, for example): the CIOs would then be reorganised on the basis of functional constituencies related to employment catchment areas, without changing anything as regards the academy to which the staff belong. The hypothesis of bringing institutions into closer contact with each other is fuelled by the argument that grouping together (local missions, employment agencies, information points for young people, CIOs) would make it possible to improve the level of service, both quantitatively and qualitatively, while increasing the amount of time that counsellors spend in schools. This prospect leads to two options: a single "shop-window" for young people, which is what parents seem to prefer, or sharing literature, and information and guidance services between diverse publics.

While the British government chose the first option, by developing a national network of youth agencies, the Rhône-Alpes region in France, on the initiative of its regional council, opted for the second. In parallel with this, the French chamber of commerce and industry assembly (ACFCI) recently issued a white paper (ACFCI, 2006), proposing that chambers of commerce and industry should invest fully in educational and vocational guidance and should even kick-start unfinished work on the subject by providing real and virtual information points and by offering professional experience options during school time. This is, then, a document which makes a singular contribution to the debate on relations between school and the world of work, hinting at new areas of competition fuelled by battles of influence between those involved in education, local authorities and economic players.

In higher education also, courses are becoming more international, via a set of programmes which aim to encourage student mobility. The first "virtual mobility" projects (which allow students to follow courses in other European countries from a distance or, conversely, complement their courses in a university abroad with others in their home university) will considerably modify the order of things in the field of guidance, introducing hitherto unequalled flexibility into the training offer. While these practices remain marginal ones, the European Commission supports their development, especially via the *Being Mobile* project which gave rise to the publication recently of a manual, *Virtual Mobility: a Best Practice Manual* (Bijnens, 2006). Faced with this new competitive arena and these increasingly complex career paths, guidance partnerships will not only have to develop at district or regional level, but also come within the framework of trans-national networks, for which the use of ICTs is indispensable (cf. [appendix](#)).

Sharing services at the European regional scale

In Rhône-Alpes, a public interest research group (PIRG) bringing together the State, the regional council and unions has been created to support a network-based organisation of structures for informing and guiding in the area and developing a common information system (Normand *et al.* 2005). Despite calls for cooperation (especially between the CIOs, the local missions for young people with learning difficulties, academy delegations for awarding diplomas on the basis of experience and the GRETA, the in-service training branch of the French National Education) the CIO network and that of the region, more turned towards employment policy, work relatively independently of each other, each system developing endogenously, while encountering similar difficulties in bringing cohesion to guidance actions.

The region's enrolment in the Leonardo project, which involves three other European regions, is nevertheless giving a new boost to the vast undertaking involved in making over practices, but pushes the CIO's and the guidance counsellor psychologists further onto the sidelines. Starting out from the observation that guidance practices are too compartmentalized, depending on the type of public, the missions and, as a corollary to this, the institutional networks (school public, young people starting out in work, job-seekers, employees, etc.), and that the sheer numbers of people involved makes it harder to understand and gain access to the services, the European project *DROA "Développement des réseaux pour l'orientation active"* (Network development for active guidance) (2003-2006, a Leonardo programme) is backing the development of infra-regional and inter-regional networks that can encourage lifelong guidance. The implementation of this has been entrusted to the Pôle Rhône-Alpes de l'orientation (PRAO - Rhône-Alpes guidance centre) and has involved the regions known as the [four motors for Europe](#) (Lombardy, Catalonia, Baden Wurtemberg, Rhône-Alpes), who have the required initial and in-service training skills. With the hypothesis that improving the quality of work and collaboration between the different entities involved would be of benefit to users, the partners took stock of guidance systems and practices in their respective regions and asked the public how satisfied they were (monographs to appear later). For the roll-out of the project itself, the article by Normand & Cheynet can be consulted (to appear in [2007](#)).

Over and above the recommendations which are proper to each regional context, the *Référentiel qualité de l'orientation* (Guidance quality knowledge referential) (2006) defines a number of common recommendations pertaining to the development of a Quality approach to active guidance, based around six topics: (1) making everyone involved aware of the notion of lifelong guidance and developing a training approach to it; (2) adapting the services on offer to the needs of publics (equal access, multiple approaches and tools, user-centred); (3) suitable resources made available (information systems on training courses, employment and guidance services, qualified staff and long-term funding); (4) development of guidance networks (recognised coordination and regulation authority, support for professionalizing those involved, and partnerships); (5) professionalising staff in charge of guidance (profile definition, appropriate initial and in-service training, development of knowledge about the local context); (6) Quality assurance (definition of standards and assessment tools, consultations extended to include the publics and the different people involved).

The English experience: a single shop-window for young people

In England, collaboration and partnerships have been developing over the last ten years (Chevallier, 2005). Following the privatisation of the public service information and guidance network in the nineties, the authorities re-focused on problem populations in 1998 (NEET: *not in employment, education or training*) and created the *Connexions* agency in 2001. This agency makes use of a network of public, associative and private people involved in youth work, covering the country as a whole. It is coordinated from the administrative and technological standpoints by the national Unit of Connexions (CSNU: *Connexions Service National Unit*). The original feature of Connexions is to supply a set of services and advice to young people aged between 13 and 19 (financial assistance, housing, health, employment, etc.) with the aim of helping to make conscious choices and accompanying the transition towards adulthood: a kind of single shop-window which re-engineers the fragmentary offer available until now and which is based on the notion of making a *personal adviser* available for each young person. The authorities play a key role here, controlling approval and funding for local partners, while the national inspection agency (OFSTED) is in charge of evaluating its efficiency.

All studies on Connexions since it was launched (including Hoggarth *et al.*, 2004) have revealed two stumbling blocks which turn out to be two sides of the same problem: the difficulty of efficiently implementing a set of general-purpose services, and that of including services relating to educational and vocational guidance within this extended set. As a corollary to this, extending professional attributions leads to a certain amount of dilution of specialised skills in the area or vocational guidance. And yet the impact of this still-youthful service on populations at risk is, on the whole, a positive one, generating a reduction of from 1 to 14% in the number of young people leaving the education system and remaining inactive (Hugues, 2005). The role of the personal advisor, when he succeeds in establishing a relationship based on trust, is largely recognised, particularly for his holistic approach and his refusal to condemn in the face of the many difficulties that these young people accumulate, but also for the way he manages – all too infrequently – to involve schools. The difficulties in defining priorities in terms of risk, in providing an intensive service and long-term follow-up are put forward, while the available resources are deemed to be inappropriate for this specific population. A recent study on the remote information services provided by *Connexions Direct* (CXD) (Starling, 2005) clearly shows that the answers provided remain superficial and impersonal, although useful, and tend to fairly systematically send users off to other "addresses". Only instant message services seem to facilitate a more "individualised" relationship.

An initial report published in 2004 by the *National audit office* (NAO, 2004) not only denounces this tightening-up of the way populations at risk are dealt with, but also points to a lack of clarity relating to the respective roles of the school and the services provided by Connexions in the area of guidance. These results are confirmed by a report from the Minister of Education (DfES, 2005) who calls for the construction of a common vision to allow all pupils to acquire the necessary skills for making educational and vocational decisions. For the authors, this involves strengthening the educational role of the school and promoting a coherent interaction between educational and non-educational players. Since 2005, the ways in the school institution and Connexions collaborate have been reconsidered, in order to extend the target. Including guidance training in the common core, in association with personalised, confidential and impartial support is said to be a success factor, as we shall see.

The experience of transition: internal and external factors that influence students' paths

Without any effective accompaniment from the institution, certain external factors may act to curb ambition: motivation and the way in which pupils represent their own aptitudes, gender expectations on school careers and jobs, pressure from parents and peers, social and economic factors influencing the job market, etc. In parallel with this, institutional characteristics, the more-or-less partial influence of the teaching body, school results and formal training in guidance may facilitate, or, conversely, inhibit the success of the chosen path (Bowes *et al.*, 2005).

The impact of personal factors

The social and economic characteristics of families, including their experience in terms of higher education and their financial ability to continue studying beyond compulsory schooling, influence the parental representations of the school career that is appropriate for their child. Young people with a clear idea of what they want to do are frequently influenced by friends or relatives whom they trust working in the same sector. Similarly, the influence exerted by the peer group during adolescence is not negligible, leading to gregarious behaviour when it comes to making choices. This "informal guidance" particularly affects the transition between Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 when there is no formal action from the school institution (Bowes *et al.*, 2005).

Ananian *et al.* (2005) show that in France pupils from executive or intermediate professional families have easier access to general curricula. Although gender does not seem to be an issue in the break-down between general and technological baccalaureate options, it has a strong impact on the choice of baccalaureate within those options, showing up the difference between literary subjects (L), medical and social sciences (SMS) and industrial sciences and technology (STT) on the one hand, which are preferred by girls, and industrial sciences and technology on the other, where boys are clearly in the majority.

According to Yvette Grelet (2005), the choice of professional subjects is not only determined by school results: family aspirations may in certain cases reinforce or reduce the effects of social background. In this way "access to professional training is obtained via one of two extreme models: transmission, the province of free-lance workers such as farmers, crafts-people, shopkeepers, etc., whose children choose to continue in the same mould; and relegation, usually by default as a result of learning difficulties. Between these two extremes, the hierarchy of subject choice can be read as a reflection of the social hierarchy".

The article by Yaël Brinbaum & Annick Kieffer (2005) sheds a different light on this parent-child dialectic, bringing certain dissonances to light. Although, at a given social level, the aspirations of immigrant families are generally higher than those of original French families, the actual school career followed by the children shows that they sometimes distance themselves from these aspirations: while Portuguese families favour professional studies, their children tend to opt more frequently for long, general curricula; conversely, families originating from North Africa aspire towards long study programmes while their children are more inclined to choose professional subjects.

Despite a general trend towards a broader range of choice for families (choice of school, choice of options), significant differences remain in the way advantage is taken of these choices, particularly depending on the level of education of the parents and the environment, rural or urban, in which they live (Osborne, 2006). While this trend implies a stronger qualitative approach and more complex forms of governance on the part of schools, it also represents a risk in terms of fairness. Giving more weight to [parents' voice](#) and that of their children in the educational system needs a new balance to be struck between supply and demand, while guaranteeing that families participate fairly.

The impact of the school environment

For Séverine Le Bastard-Landrier (2004), inequalities in guidance in the first year of the French *lycée* (age 15) vary according to the school and particularly to the social make-up of its public: this is an internal process which is more or less explicitly part of the school policy and which involves managing the social mix of its pupils by dividing them up into the different options.

Conversely, Nadia Nakhili (2004) shows that the social make-up of schools and the local availability of preparatory classes for the *grandes écoles* (competitive-entrance higher education establishments) have a cumulative impact on final-year students' aspirations. Put differently, a pupil who is educated in a privileged school with a preparatory class for the *grandes écoles* is three times more likely to turn towards this selective option. This influence could be explained by a phenomenon of emulation, or *peer effect* and by teachers' attitudes, as they develop different practices and express higher expectations. These are effects which nevertheless remain modest as compared with the which best predict the probability of requesting a preparatory class for a *grande école* (the type of baccalaureate and grades obtained, and the pupil's age when in the final year).

According to Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006), pupils make more rational choices that are less dependent on outside influences from the family and the peer group, and that are less likely to be called into question during their school career in schools that are efficient in programme management, that display strong leadership characteristics and provides assistance with decision-making from teachers. However, courses available within the school play a role in mediation performed by the teachers, tending to channel paths locally.

The impact of educational experience

The article by Séverine Le Bastard-Landrier (2005) shows that certain dimensions of the educational experience in the first year of the *lycée*, such as the pupils' perception of their educational level or their relationship with the disciplines, influence their school results in a significant way (in French and mathematics) together with how they formulate their choice of path. According to her, the level perception is mostly in keeping with the results obtained, practically cancelling out the social background. Option choices, on the other hand, are largely conditioned by a set of factors involving the gender of the child and the socio-professional category of the parents as well as the educational experience.

So it is that pupils who have had to repeat a school year before reaching the *lycée* more often choose technological branches of study. Those who tend to under- or overestimate their level are more likely to ask for options that are out of line with their educational profile: 65.5% of the pupils who underestimate themselves in French go for science subjects in their final two years, whereas 40% of those who underestimate themselves in mathematics opt for science subjects regardless. In parallel with this, half the pupils who plan on making literary studies the main subject of their baccalaureate are thought to be motivated in this by an aversion to mathematics. The better the pupils are at mathematics, the more they opt for science subjects in their final two years; similarly, pupils who are good at both French and mathematics freely choose science subjects. The choice to take science subjects during the final two years is motivated by both social and educational criteria: coming from a privileged family has a positive influence on the decision to make that choice; girls are 15% less likely to ask for these subjects, thereby confirming their representation of the scientific professions as being masculine and their lower propensity to set out along a path that does not comply with how they anticipate their future life. In the same way, the fact of having already had to repeat a year before reaching the *lycée* reduces the probabilities of choosing this path.

Sylvie Lemaire (2005) shows that doing a year again, and therefore age, also plays a role in the choice of options: pupils who have obtained their baccalaureate without ever doing a year again (only three out of ten) are more likely than others to continue in the selective branches of higher education (preparatory classes, selective higher education establishments, higher technical branches or university technological institutes). Aspirations expressed in the final year, in which too a difference between the genders can be read, obviously influence this choice, but the pupil's educational history remains the deciding factor: the type and grade of baccalaureate, and, up to a certain point, the educational context and role of the teachers have a significant bearing on the choices made.

Professional projects and changes in educational path

The study carried out by Emmanuelle Nauze-Fichet (2005) shows that, seven years after beginning secondary education, a majority of pupils are still in initial education and declare that they have a professional project, more so for apprentices, pupils in their final year of secondary education and girls in general. While the guarantee of finding a job is a priority factor for a quarter of the pupils questioned, girls base their choice of project on affinity and boys on the promise of a good salary.

The analysis of key factors in determining changes of higher education path for students who have the baccalaureate sheds further light on the complexity of the professional project (Dubois-Dunilac *et al.*, 2006). Of the 8 000 students holding a general or technological baccalaureate in the Centre region of France, a quarter had their initial project refused. 71% changed project, 54% changed project and location and 18% changed location. Students with technological baccalaureates have their project refused proportionally more frequently and more than a third of them turn to the job market (as against 13% for holders of a general baccalaureate). The analysis shows, however, that it is more the subjects taken at baccalaureate level than the type of baccalaureate that counts, with a higher rate of change of direction for medical and social sciences (SMS) and tertiary sciences and techniques (STT). Girls, grant holders, students who are behind at school, those from non-executive families or from a region that has suffered economically encounter more difficulties than others in their desired path. The "project effect" itself depends on the branch chosen: asking for a preparatory class, paramedical or social training, or a business school is more risky in terms of changing direction than opting for a sandwich course. These results show the existence of cross-currents of influence associating educational path, gender and the characteristics of the project. Individual choices massively influence the probability of having to change direction for general baccalaureate holders; in contrast, it is the sub-

jects making up the baccalaureate that make the most difference for technological baccalaureate holder. A quarter of baccalaureate holders changed direction because of negative answers to their requests, while one baccalaureate holder out of ten discovered another educational establishment or another course. Cost, results at the baccalaureate, distance or enrolment procedures add to the other factors. Baccalaureate holders aiming for a course with a professional qualification or, more generally, a short training course are more likely to turn *en masse* to the job market; conversely, those who are aiming for a selective branch that attracts the best baccalaureate holders (preparatory schools for the competitive-entrance higher education establishments and university technological institutes) are among those who turn the least to the job market.

Towards a new guidance culture

Education à l'orientation (EAO, careers education) in France: a partial reform

Careers education first appeared in France in 1996 (with circular 96-204 of 31/07/96 for *collèges* and circular 96-230 du 01/10/96 for *lycées*). No official text specifies that it is to be applied in vocational *lycées*, while the *collège* circular remains experimental to date. These [texts](#), in addition, allow sufficient margin for interpretation for highly contrast approaches to have arisen in different *académies* and within the schools.

So the *Note d'information* 03.18 ([Benhaim](#), 2003) shows careers education to be implemented in 55% of *collèges* and 37% of *lycées*, suggesting a certain over-cautiousness: results that remain difficult to interpret, while the very definition of "éducation à l'orientation" is far from clear.

According to Jean-Pierre Cartier (in [Odry](#), 2006), this situation might be explained by certain special features of the French system, placing the educational approach in an ambiguous, or even paradoxical position:

- including professional courses within the initial training part of the educational system reinforces selection by failure and limits the point of the professional project;
- the decision-making power entrusted (de facto) to teaching staff makes any attempt by the pupils to choose a fruitless one: learning to choose what direction to take becomes a pointless exercise;
- compartmentalizing services, separating the guidance of people within the school system from those without, does not encourage the development of skills for lifelong guidance;
- the psychological anchoring of educational guidance places practitioners in a defensive position, difficult to reconcile with a pedagogical approach that is likely to threaten their professional identity.

According to Bernard Desclaux (in [Odry](#), 2006) and André Legrand ([2005](#)) in particular, the principle of freedom of choice which underpins the EAO may be seen as the final effort of the institution to exculpate itself from the social selection inherent in the way pupils are dispatched within the educational system. The fact is that the EAO, as it exists in France has more in common with a preparation for the allocation procedure than with a process that aims to promote personal development. The question here hinted at is nothing less than that of the school's mission: should it pass on knowledge or inculcate skills; issue qualifications or promote successful integration? How can the tensions between the institutional, the personal and the social which are interwoven into careers education and which are logically divergent in terms of time-frame and obligation, be resolved (Desclaux, in [Odry](#), 2006)? While career management is relatively well controlled, the personal project and lifelong guidance, which call on the involvement of local players, are by and large neglected. Although the texts do state that a number of people need to be involved, the guidance processes are never made explicit other than as injunctions to inform, advise and teach how to choose. Does the implementation of a [compulsory guidance interview](#) in the fourth year of secondary education as of 2007, under the responsibility of the form tutor (with possible support from the guidance counsellor psychologist and which families can attend) not tend to reinforce the procedural nature of guidance? What room is there here for "dreams of the future" ([L'Indécis, n° 57-58](#))?

The vocational discovery module introduced into the last year of Key Stage 3 in 2005 aims to reduce the number of unqualified school-leavers. Published in early 2007, an inspectors' report (Cahuzac *et al.*, [2007](#)) takes stock of this weekly 6 hour module, in operation in 75% of vocational *lycées* and mainly run by [teachers teaching](#) two subjects. It is designed for "*volunteer pupils with learning difficulties, ready to rally round a training project that may be vocational, general or technological*". This class has two specific features: the "*implementation of a practical, project-based learning strategy to allow pupils to learn differently from concrete situations that have to do with the world of work*" and the fact that it is "*run by a multidisciplinary teaching team (including psychologist guidance counsellors) so as to continue developing general skills and knowledge (within a common-core framework), while also presenting the knowledge necessary for the professional world*".

Despite a growth in numbers since 2005, the number of pupils, a majority of boys, remains marginal: 4% of the pupils in the year for public-sector schools and 6% for private schools (or approximately 32 000 pupils). The authors also note extremely diversified approaches that stem from the varying degrees of mobilisation of the inspectors within the *académies* and the management teams within the schools; they stress the need for official clarification concerning the responsibilities of the general and regional Councils. However, some malfunctioning has been observed: programmes taught by a single teacher or by teachers that do not hold a post within the school; concentration on the specific subjects of the vocational *lycée* alone; a lack of coordination on split sites (*collège* and vocational *lycée*); a lack of consultation between teachers teaching the module, leading to ineffective learning; an incomplete discovery strategy, concentrating either on exploration or on practical work; inadequate diversification of the professional fields explored and the places where training takes place; and an over-simplified approach to success indicators. No light was shed on the question of the marginalisation of these 15 year-olds placed in the vocational *lycée*.

In his *Schéma national de l'orientation et de l'insertion professionnelle (National scheme for guidance and integration into the world of work)*, the inter-ministerial delegate for guidance ([Lunel](#), 2007) called for the vocational discovery module to be extended to all fourth year classes, at a rate of two hours per week, as of September 2009. This plan also confirms that a personalised guidance interview would be implemented for all pupils in the fourth year of secondary school and in the sixth year for pupils preparing the general, technological and professional baccalaureate, as well as for the first year of the CAP and BEP (professional diplomas), under the direction of the form tutor. As a further measure, Lunel proposes using the hour of class time with the form tutor to concentrate on learning about training possibilities and using the ONISEP portfolio to allow each pupil to collect the results of what he learns about different jobs/professions and training courses, and his thinking about his professional project. While the conditions in which this vocational discovery module would be rolled out remain for the moment unclear (school principals are free to interpret how this should be done), the report suggests making information and

guidance centres (CIOs) into authorities whose priorities would be "information and coordination for educational and vocational guidance, in liaison with companies and the public employment service". In this line-up, the missions of the guidance counsellors would be refocused on the economic world. This set of measures would come within the scope of the makeover of programmes and would foreshadow the introduction of guidance as part of the common core of knowledge and skills.

Careers education and guidance (CEG) in England

□ Contexts and systems

Since 1997, the legislative framework obliges schools that receive public funding to implement career education and guidance, or CEG. This obligation was first applied to key stage 4 and extended to all years in 2004, (DfES, [2003](#)) and was accompanied by the definition of "recommended" programme, but, paradoxically, did not offer the means to roll out such a programme (times, specialised teachers, funding, etc).

Before 1997, these lessons were given by teachers on a voluntary basis (*careers education teachers*) who had become specialised through in-service training, while continuing to teach their original subject. Introducing the subject into the curriculum led to an implicit broadening of the initial functions towards organisation, coordination and management tasks, including the development of internal and external partnerships, making the term that has become widespread today of "careers co-ordinators" rather unrepresentative of these multiple functions (Andrews *et al.*, [2004](#)). Similarly, recognition of these functions would necessitate the creation of a dedicated initial training course and that the teacher drops his original discipline.

The Connexions agency, created in 2001, is an important part of the system, despite links with the school institution that were at the start lacking in formality and marginal, and in spite of predominant focusing on populations at risk. After a turbulent period during which the future of Connexions was uncertain (Hugues, 2005), the Connexions agencies were brought together with the newly-created *Children's Trusts* network in the framework of the *Every Child Matters* programme. The aim of this was to develop synergy between the school and all youth services, by broadening out its range of services to include the whole of the school population. An initial ministerial report was published last autumn (DfES, [2006](#)), which summed up this restructuring and showing that the rate at which these new synergies are rolled out greatly depends on the local context and especially how far and in what areas people are prepared to get involved in a broader partnership process.

In this context, where it is difficult to see which way things will go, the question of including the CEG in the main curriculum is a relevant one. While aspects related to the pupil's personal development, especially *Personal, social and health education* (PSHE), have been introduced progressively, these subjects, the CEG included, can be seen to occupy a position on the sidelines of the curriculum. The fact that school management does not see them as high priority, or feels unable to organise quality teaching of them, is obviously slowing down the rate at which they are deployed (Bowes *et al.*, [2005](#)).

If the CEG is to be effectively included into the educational system a coherent strategy instilling a progression from one level to another and promoting effective partnerships with the teaching staff will be required. This is the position defended by McGowan ([2006](#)), who, in a report published by the *National Institute for Careers Education and Counselling* (NICEC), puts forward proposals for putting career learning at the heart of the main curriculum. She calls for the creation of a framework programme recognising the roles and responsibilities of the different partners (especially the *career co-ordinator* and the *career personal adviser* of Connexions) and based on a common vision.

Two literature reviews performed by the *Transitions review group* of the EPPI-centre (Moon *et al.*, [2004](#); Smith *et al.*, [2005](#)) show that efficient formal guidance teaching requires such an approach, making interventions from teachers, professional advice and suitable resources all work coherently together throughout secondary schooling and promoting partnerships between schools and outside agencies.

Current thinking by the *Qualifications and curriculum authority* (QCA) on setting up a common *Personal learning and thinking skills* (PLTS) programme is a move in this direction and ought to make it possible to include decision-making skills within a less marginal framework (Blenkinsop *et al.*, [2006](#)). It is expected that this thinking will come up with the answer to the question: should the CEG be included as a subject in its own right, or is it more a transversal approach involving several subjects?

□ What assessment?

The two literature reviews of the EPPI-centre shed light on the impact of careers education programmes when making the choice of subjects after key stage 3 (Moon *et al.*, 2004) and on the transition between secondary and higher education (Smith *et al.*, [2005](#)).

All the studies examined reveal similar difficulties for deployment: a very uneven quality of services provided in secondary schools, a fragmentary, incoherent offer, often restricted to key transition periods and focused on delivering information. These difficulties can be put down to a set of factors which make up quality indicators: the school administration, the content and organisation of CEG programmes, how qualified the staff in charge of this subject are, the relevance of school activities and literature available in the school library.

The article by Bowes *et al.* ([2005](#)), a summing-up of the main results of these two literature reviews, shows that these studies generally agree on the fact that the quality of the offer has an impact on the pupils' ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate decisions for crossing the threshold between compulsory education and professional life. Pupils who are self-confident, aware and independent in the way they explore training courses and jobs are more likely to succeed in what they choose to do, and the diversity of methods, activities and tools has a positive impact on the development of such skills. Project-based learning and access to varied information on educational programmes and the job market are some of the factors that make it easier to make relevant choices.

The recurrent insistence on beginning formal careers education early on is justified by the need to develop, as far upstream as possible, pupils' awareness of relations between school career and professional career, to counter the weight of external influences (parent and peer pressure). While pupils who want to continue their studies make their choice relatively early, those whose future school career is more uncertain need more guidance, more suited to their specific needs. The impact of this formal education is therefore largely conditioned by taking into account differences in pupils' needs throughout their schooling, depending on internal and external factors that are likely to influence choices: boys or girls, those who plan on leaving the educational system or continuing their studies, those who succeed or those with poor results, etc. Introducing sufficient flexibility to take these individual needs into consideration is a move which clearly earns praise in the studies analysed.

A recent Scottish study ([Webb, 2006](#)) shows that successful guidance is not based just on formal education and that four types of factor are at play: (1) information that is as exhaustive as possible on possible paths, made available early on, proactively and impartially, with the help of documents and direct contacts fuelling experience, including making pupils aware of the informal mechanisms that have an impact on the decision-making process, and thinking on the implications of the choices made; (2) support for pupils based on strengthened CEG programmes including concrete investigations in the branches proposed, interventions from the outside during school time, and making parents aware; (3) preparation for decision-making upstream of the times when choices need to be made, backed up by more learning activities related to the job market and the opportunity to test different paths before committing to them; (4) greater flexibility in the combination of options, based on institutional collaboration within a given district, and backed up by facilities making it easier for pupils to move around.

The "approche orientante" (AO) (guidance-oriented approach) in Quebec

□ Contexts and systems

The guidance-oriented approach appeared in Quebec in 1993, in the wake of the work done by the [OCCOPPO](#) (the order of guidance counsellors and psycho-educators of Québec), relayed by the [AQISEP](#) (Quebec association for educational and vocational information). With the objective of qualifying 100% of pupils, the educational reform launched in 2000 puts forward the hypothesis that success is closely linked to pupils' motivation with regard to integration. The "pedagogical revival" draws, then, on this "guidance" idea to redefine the *Programme de formation de l'école québécoise* (PFEQ - Quebec education programme) and selects guidance as one of the five general fields of training, under the title [Orientation et entrepreneuriat](#) ([MEQ, 2002](#)).

The guidance-oriented approach, making use of project-based learning, stresses skill acquisition: the school should offer the pupil the means to develop and bring his talents and aptitudes to the fore, and understand the relationship between what is learnt at school and society, particularly the world of work. In other words, disciplinary skills, transverse skills and skills related to career development must be made to match so that the pupil can take on the responsibility for his "vocational progression", as shown by the [model](#) drawn up by the GPSAO (Quebec province support group for an guidance-oriented approach at school) of Sherbrooke university. Unlike career-based education, the guidance-oriented approach belongs to a multidimensional conception which includes personal, social development and development as a citizen. Integration and consultation are at the heart of this new approach which hinges on three principles: (1) the principle of infusion (including professional outlooks in the disciplines); (2) the principle of collaboration (promoting consultation of school, professional and family players); (3) the principle of mobilisation (awakening a motivated attitude which puts the pupil into "project mode") ([Pelletier, 2004](#)).

The guidance-oriented approach, in concrete terms, involves commitment from all school staff in this information and guidance mission and the implementation of curricular and extracurricular activities which give the opportunity to include thinking on vocational progress. Among the systems proposed as of the end of the primary school is the individual training plan ([PIF](#)), available as an [option](#) on [Repères](#), the databank for educational and vocational information. The PIF is a personal and confidential instrument providing assistance with the educational guidance and the decision-making approach, enabling the pupil to collect information about himself, his school world and his career aspirations: a kind of portfolio, now available as an electronic version which accompanies the pupil throughout his school career.

More recently, a personal guidance project ([PPO](#)) was introduced into the curriculum, launched as an experimental subject in 2003. Compulsory for all pupils as of the middle school who have chosen a general education, and optional for all pupils in the upper school as of September 2007, the PPO aims to develop two skills: performing an exploratory approach to guidance and taking stock of one's position with regard to one's educational and vocational choices. Teachers play the role of guide (they help to structure the approach), group leader (managing the class group) and mediator (coordinating contacts with school and community partners), giving preference to personal, experience-based and integrating situations. As this involves personal development for the staff, several research actions have been implemented, particularly on the initiative of the education faculty of Sherbrooke university, through initial and in-service workshops aiming to encourage the development of collaboration between school / university staff, and family / community environments. [L'école en chantier](#) has already carried out three projects on guidance: [\(1\)](#) and [\(2\)](#) in 2004, and [\(3\)](#) in 2006.

Driven in France by the association [Apprendre et s'orienter](#), the guidance-oriented approach gave rise in 2003 to original experiments in the Montpellier *académie* ([Ferré, 2005](#)). A Leonardo project is currently uniting European partners with the aim of studying different forms of the guidance-oriented approach in Spain, France and Italy.

□ What assessment?

The reform, implemented in 2000 in primary schools, came into force in 2004 in secondary schools. But the roll-out of the guidance-oriented approach seems to suffer from serious inequalities, according to school committees, partly because of the fact that no global assessment has been commissioned by the authorities. So appraisal is fragmentary, while the projects depend for their stimulation and assessment mainly on the mobilization of professional associations ([AQISEP](#) symposiums, for example) and the [GPSAO](#), under the leadership of Denis Marceau, Marcelle Gingras & Pierrette Dupont. The study by Cynthia Camiré, presented to the [AQISEP 2006 symposium](#), nevertheless reveals a significant lack of information available to practitioners and difficulty in implementing collaboration with schools, especially because of inadequate consultation time.

Initial feedback demonstrates that the guidance-oriented approach encourages the development of skills both for pupils and for educational partners ([Gingras, 2007](#)). The survey carried out by Moisan ([2001](#)) reports positive reactions from management staff and pupils who appreciate the synergetic aspect, and concrete and interactive dimensions of the measure respectively; but it underlines the lack of maturity, especially in partnership aspects. From the pupils' standpoint, the results are encouraging, showing the beneficial spin-offs of self-knowledge, self-esteem, awareness of the world of work and the educational system, motivation at school and changing career aspirations.

More recently, the research action carried out by the GPSAO and the Polyvalente de Disraeli ([2004](#)) provides a successful example of collaboration between researchers and practitioners at the service of the orienting approach. 37 pupils experiencing adjustment and learning difficulties and enrolled in a temporary progress programme, took part, for one school year, in around fifteen activities involving teachers of different disciplines and aiming to create and manage a mini-company. Although this programme had little impact on school results, it did help the pupils to maintain interest and motivation in their studies

and made it possible to reduce the drop-out rate as compared with the previous year. The questionnaires, administered at the beginning and end of the experiment reveal that the majority of pupils acquired the targeted disciplinary and transverse skills, while in other cases these are well on the way to being acquired. Similarly, the orienting activities had a positive effect on skills related to career development, demonstrating that representations had matured: at the end of the experiment, the pupils turned out to be less undecided about their professional future and more aware of the values of entrepreneurship (and the responsibilities required). Although all the partners involved noted how stimulating this collaboration was, they do think that the assessment tools could be diversified and the pupils more involved in organising the programme.

Widespread implementation of the personal guidance project in 2007 follows several pilot experiments which were evaluated to determine what conditions were favourable to its being set up, to measure the respective contributions of the partners involved and to appraise the added value as far as the pupils were concerned. In particular, the provisional report of the Quebec minister for Education, Leisure and Sport (Roy, 2006) shows that the personal guidance project "meets essentially with the needs of pupils and that it is approved by a majority of those involved and parents, who consider it as a programme that encourages the start of a conscious guidance approach in pupils". The personal guidance project, however, applies to a particular kind of school organisation which needs planning (with times set aside for teamwork, computers available in the classroom, etc.). Appropriating this new kind of learning, based on diversification, requires that the rhythm and professional autonomy of those involved be respected and that initial and in-service training be bolstered. Such a more-or-less long-term challenge also presupposes that conscious thinking on the part of the pupils be encouraged and that assessment be thought about anew, basing it on the individual development of each pupil throughout the process: although pupils express the need for feedback on their personal approach, they consider that assessment which takes the form of marks, and therefore punishment, is incongruous. Adherence by the pupils seems to be greatly impacted, on the one hand, by the number of hours (75 or 100 throughout the year) and the frequency of participation in the personal guidance project and, on the other hand, the variety of the tools used in the experimentation. In parallel with this, the impact on skills is obvious: the proportion of undecided pupils fell by half, aspirations for vocational training went up by 15%, pupils have a better awareness of the need to prepare for their future (exploration and planning), etc.

Guidance put to the test by employment?

With or without diplomas: getting into the world of work is marked by a lack of security

The study carried out by Quintili *et al.* (2007) on the integration of young people into the world of work in OECD member countries, shows that the transition between school and employment remains characterised by many different types of insecurity: one or two year or even more to find a job at the end of schooling; a succession of temporary or part-time jobs that are usually badly paid and that serve in only a very uneven way as springboards to permanent, on-going employment.

A recent *Note d'information* (Dethare, 2006) paints an alarming picture of unqualified higher-education-leavers in France. While 9 baccalaureate-holders out of 10 in 2002 continue their studies, 2 of them stop after one or two years' training. In the three years after getting their baccalaureate, the proportion of young people leaving university with a diploma is 77% in IUTs (university technological institutes) and 67% in the STSs (courses for higher-level technicians). The impact of the type of baccalaureate obtained is not negligible: 2/3 of those holding a professional baccalaureate and 1/3 of technological baccalaureate-holders, as against 8% of those with a general baccalaureate stop their studies.

The latest study by the Céreq (study and research centre into qualifications), on the integration of young people into higher education (Giret *et al.*, 2005), shows that the conditions for the integration of young people into the world of work are far from being homogeneous. While they are particularly vulnerable for unqualified leavers (a quarter of the population leaving higher education), only certain courses leading to professional diplomas conserve job outlets: this is the case for health and social schools and, to a lesser extent, schools for higher-level technicians, university technological institutes and university institutes for vocational training.

As stated in the Proglio (2006) report, young people leaving higher education are also confronted with phenomena of increased unemployment, longer times before finding a job and having to accept jobs for which they are over-qualified. In this setting, where lack of job security has become commonplace, even though students, especially those from selective and vocational branches, seem relatively confident in their future, it is nevertheless a fact that diplomas are not keeping their promise and are not enough to ensure successful integration into the world of work. This situation is obviously not unique to France, but is particularly acute in the French context, where the diploma earned at the end of initial training remains a weighty criterion in the recruitment process.

Is regulation via qualifications an illusion?

After the emblematic slogan of the eighties and nineties which set a target of 80% of all pupils to obtain the baccalaureate, a recent report from the high commission for education, economy and employment (Legendre, 2006) sets new perspectives, aiming for 50% of a given generation to obtain higher education qualifications, the current rate being 38%. The author believes that bringing 50% of a generation to a higher-education qualification level is economically and socially profitable: a stance which is also defended by Philippe Lemistre (2007), but which is far from being agreed upon unanimously, as can be seen from the work of the Iredu (educational research institute), and especially that of Marie Duru-Bellat (2006) who denounces the abusive relationship set up between the individual advantage to be gained from obtaining qualifications and awarding diplomas as a growth factor for society as a whole.

Similarly, the competitiveness of a knowledge economy which stakes everything on inciting people to pursue long courses of study is taking its time to prove itself effective. According to the forecasts made by the DEP (assessment and forecasting department) (Chirache *et al.*, 2006), recruitment requirements will be lower than the number of young people leaving the educational system by 2015, notwithstanding the number of people retiring; these requirements turn out to be slightly on the increase for young people with a higher level at the baccalaureate (46%). A report for the CAS (Centre for strategic analysis) and the Darès (government research, studies and statistics department) (Chardon *et al.*, 2007) shows that employment will become relatively stagnant by 2015, and forecasts stability in reaching baccalaureate level and access to higher education, with wholesale recruitment of people with few qualifications and, in parallel with this, high rates of unemployment for baccalaureate-holders (21%), CAP and BEP holders (vocational diplomas (25%) and even higher rates for the unqualified (56%).

According to François Dubet (2006), a more constructive attitude would be to question not just the relevance of extending the length of studies across the board, but that of the value of qualifications. The equation in force during the sixties which linked the number of baccalaureate-holders with the number of people in middle and upper management is no longer valid today. The wholesale enrolment of students in arts and human science faculties is costly, both for the young people and their families, and for society as a whole, in an area where the difference between having the baccalaureate and a degree is practically zero in terms of getting a job. These branches, believed to be unselective are, in reality, very selective.

Bridges or division into sectors?

Giving thought to matching training to foreseeable job offers involves, according to François Dubet (2006), calling into question courses which apportion value to a general, abstract culture, to the detriment of certain human or social qualities, for example. This thinking also requires that the necessarily biased propensity to democratise the [training of the elite](#) be reduced, so as to encourage socially and economically efficient training, especially at the level of employment catchment areas. Put differently, encourage skills and not qualifications: extending the length of studies is of no point unless it corresponds to a certain social usefulness, and not to a sideline, in a society where educational merit and professional merit are more and more detached from one another.

Should the training map be redesigned or not? In other words, should one opt for a division into sectors that would make training more professional, or introduce more flexibility into the educational path? While it seems relevant to explore these two options, how to reconcile them is something of a paradox. The idea of creating bridges to enable students to reorient is not a new one, but it takes on a new degree of acuteness in the light of the two-cycle degree structures (licence, master, doctorat, LMD) and the acquisition of qualifications on the strength of experience (VAE). It was particularly with this in mind that the tertiary sciences and techniques baccalaureate (STT) was [reformed](#) in 2005. The technological courses of the new management sciences and technology baccalaureate (STG) have been redefined to raise the level of requirements in terms of general education. The objective is to obtain a baccalaureate which will open all the doors to higher education: is this an illusion, or the reality? In the British context, Blenkinsop *et al.* (2006) suggest another possible path: the inclusion of vocational teaching in all programmes, which would have the advantage of partly defusing the poor image that professional qualifications suffer from. Should more general qualifications be created, or more modular ones to encourage students to make their choice of subject less early on and to change courses? However this may be, this reform of the STT runs counter to the proposals of the Thélot (2004b) report, chapter 2, which recommended remodelling diplomas and pathways, aiming at a marked differentiation between the baccalaureates and an attractiveness in keeping with society's needs.

How can schooling and employment be brought closer together?

While it appears difficult to contest the need to bring schooling and employment closer together, the question remains of how this should be done. Defending the idea of a mechanical equation between schooling and employment seems to be largely illusory: the report of the Thélot commission is particularly revealing in this respect. The mission of school or university is not so much to meet *in extenso* with the needs of companies as to give young people all the necessary basics to make choices and develop in a job that will inevitably undergo significant changes throughout their career.

The topicality of this question concerns all those involved in educational systems. The OECD has made it one of its priorities: the organisation has just launched a series of consultations in which around fifteen member countries will take part between 2006 and 2009. The objective of this topic-based examination is to identify the main barriers standing in the way of employment and to assess the relevance and effectiveness of existing systems for facilitating the transition between schooling and work. The first volume, published in February 2007, takes a look at Belgium ([OECD](#), 2007) and puts forward a number of recommendations, the spirit of which can easily be transferred: an early intervention, even before the end of compulsory schooling, to prevent students from dropping out; development of sandwich course at all levels of the educational system; selective and active accompaniment for school-leavers to get to grips with the job market; strengthening assistance for vocational training in companies for less well-qualified young people.

The topics chosen for thinking within the context of the [national debate on university and employment](#) in France (April - October 2006) echo these recommendations: they involve guidance, information and integration into the world of work, professionalising studies within the framework of the two-cycle degree structures (LMD), and apprenticeship and the development of sandwich courses. Around these three topics, the commission, chaired by Patrick Hetzel (2006) stresses the need to change the entire university system and underlines the development of new forms of cooperation with *lycées* and education authorities on the one hand, and economic partners and employment services on the other. In spite of the fact that the universities subscribe to these general principles, the report remains vague on how to implement this change and with what means: the request to open up 50 000 extra places for the places BTS qualification (higher technical diploma) will in all probability not be accepted. While 67 universities volunteered to implement the [new university enrolment procedures](#), [active guidance](#) raises a number of questions: could the failure of technological and professional baccalaureate-holders at university be put down to a lack of information on courses available and, in particular on those paths that recruit more students than there will be jobs available? Isn't identifying pupils who are not cut out for university tantamount to an attack on equal opportunity, or even pre-selection, under another name?

Making contact, informing and guiding in higher education

While questions of guidance at school mainly involve the kinds of systems that help the pupil become more aware of his own aptitudes and ability to understand the relationship between learning at school and society, the issues in higher education are much more focussed on contact with the students, making information available to them and on the transition towards employment. These are issues that appear both upstream (liaison with secondary schooling) and downstream (integrating the world of work) of the university period, as the Simon report (2006) makes clear.

On the sidelines of the question of social and economic profitability of the qualification, the report of high commission for education, economy and employment ([Legendre](#), 2006) in fact asks a double question: how can we limit students' leaving higher education without qualifications and how can we aim for effectiveness in pursuing studies in higher education? To answer this, the author recommends developing pedagogy based on personal projects and interdisciplinary studies (by bringing back supervised personal work at *lycée* level, for example), active support in guidance from teaching staff and decompartmentalising baccalaureates by the association of one or two complementary options. At higher education level, the report

recommends injecting further resources to follow up first-year students and institute guidance assessment at the end of the first semester, with changes in course possible.

According to Henri Proglio (2006), "the preoccupation with inculcating awareness of professional choices should not be a one-off preoccupation during a training course or job-seeking session at the end of one's studies, but should be included in the courses themselves". It would then be a question of setting guidance services "within a more global context of opening studies up to the economic and professional environment as far upstream as possible", by introducing in all university course, for example, optional credits on the knowledge of that environment and on building a personal project. Such an arrangement would necessarily involve refocusing aptitudes and skills as much upstream as downstream: providing support for students in the development of "orienting" skills and ensuring that potential recruiters have a clearer view of their professional skills.

This preoccupation with accompanying new students and focusing on the professional project is not, however, a new one: the "student's professional project" module (PPE), initiated in 1984 at the Claude-Bernard Lyon 1 University, has been progressively transposed to other universities with backing from the Lyon association [Trouver Créer](#). Today, the national network of "student's professional project" pilots brings together teachers/researchers/ and staff from university information and guidance services (SCUIO) of about forty French universities within the [Projetpro](#), association created in 2006. These "pilots" coordinate the setting up of the PPE in their establishment and meet in yearly seminars ([Arrous](#), 2006).

The Simon report (2006) is one of the rare ministerial publications to take an interest in welcome and guidance for new university students and particularly in the roles played by the SCUIOs. The authors give an account of a number of innovative approaches observed in the establishments visited, both to make the enrolment process more operational, accompany students as they discover the university system and make relationships between training and employment clearer; these approaches are nevertheless rolled out in very unequal fashion from university to university, or even from discipline to discipline (scientific disciplines being generally more dynamic).

According to Simon, the question of governance and [leadership](#) appears as a key issue for success in those establishments where the SCUIOs are given backing by the central authorities (Chairman and council for studies and university life), included in the teaching teams and provided with staff who have different skills and come from different backgrounds. The implementation of a national policy for welcome and guidance is subservient to two prerequisites: (1) granting the teaching mission of universities as much importance as their research mission, and (2) setting ambitious objectives for universities (50% of an age class to be qualified) and giving them the means to reach these. With this in view, the author recommends making the liaison between secondary and higher education an academic priority, encouraging technological and professional baccalaureate-holders to turn towards short courses and to develop the abilities of higher-education practitioners to analyse the economic environment.

The creation in September 2006 of the [interministerial guidance delegation](#), placed under the twin supervision of the Education and Employment ministries, can be seen as part of the development of new synergies between politicians, economists and educationalists. The report by its delegate ([Lunel](#), 2007) confirms the proposals of the Hetzel report on active guidance: widespread use of the "single candidature file" as of 2009; a class council during the second term of the final year of secondary school devoted to guidance and assessing the pupil's project in the light of his talents, motivations and school results; processing of this file by the universities who will issue an opinion on the wishes expressed; accompaniment of new students by master's or doctorate students; maintaining this single candidature file throughout the whole of the first year of the degree course, thereby making it possible to change courses. Lunel calls for the creation of a university/company committee and for a guidance, internship and integration department (DOSI) in each university, and suggests several approaches for a better implementation of national and regional policies. But the repositioning of the existing SCUIO structures is not broached, neither is that of the professionals employed in these departments. Overall, the report remains vague about the people who will be actually in charge of implementing the new measures. Similarly, the question of the failure of technological and professional baccalaureate-holders does not receive any particular attention. While the spirit of the *National scheme for guidance and integration into the world of work* echoes various recommendations issued in recent reports, the future alone will tell us whether the State will really endow itself with the means to accompany this reform and whether these makeovers will be effective in terms of educational and vocational guidance.

Appendixes

European tools for educational and vocational guidance

□ For users

- Fit for Europe: <http://www.fit-for-europe.info/>
launched in January 2007, the site provides information on education, training and employment in 31 European countries.
- Ploteus - <http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/portal/home.jsp> Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout the European Space.
- Eures - <http://ec.europa.eu/eures/home.jsp?lang=en> the European Job Mobility Portal.

□ For professionals

- Academia - <http://www.ac-creteil.fr/steurop/english/index.html>
European exchange program for vocational-guidance counsellors. European network of organisations, funded through the Leonardo Da Vinci programme, which organises trans-national training course for guidance practitioners.
- Virtual community of The European Commission's Expert Group on Lifelong Guidance (CEDEFOP)
http://communities.trainingvillage.gr/lifelong_guidance
a site allowing practitioners, decision-makers, researchers and unions to contribute to the work of the group of experts on lifelong guidance set up by the European Commission: exchanges of viewpoints and experiences (over 500 people signed up).
- Exemplo - <http://www.evta.net>
a virtual forum for exchanging good practices accessible via extranet, to provide its guidance practitioner members, with

products, methods and advice to facilitate their search for partners, and to encourage cooperation (managed by the European vocational training association ETVA or AEFPP).

- Guidenet - <http://www.guidenet.org/> (IE only)
a pilot project (2001-2004) funded through the Leonardo da Vinci programme, coordinated by Careers Europe (a member of the European Euroguidance network) for the construction of a trans-national expertise network bringing together innovative approaches to guidance, assessing them, commenting on them and broadcasting them as widely as possible in the European guidance environment.
- A European forum on guidance research (European guidance and counselling research forum, EGCRF) - <http://www.guidance-europe.org/>
A forum within the framework of a Leonardo Da Vinci programme entitled *Supporting innovative counselling and guidance: building dialogue between research and practice*, which aims to develop a network to bring together researchers and practitioner, mainly dealing with questions of fairness and discriminations. Participating countries: Denmark, Finland, Greece, the UK, Slovenia.

European documentation on educational and vocational guidance policies

- Draft Resolution of the Council and of the representatives of the Member States meeting within the Council on Strengthening Policies, Systems and Practices in the field of Guidance throughout life in Europe, may 2004. http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/resolution2004_en.pdf
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