

Training & Employment

VOCATIONAL CERTIFICATION: HOW THE SOCIAL PARTNERS CONTRIBUTE TO DEVELOPING THE SUPPLY

Vocational certification procedures in France cover a wide and varied spectrum, ranging from state educational diplomas to homologated qualifications and vocational qualification certificates. Although the social partners are far from taking a back seat in the decision-making processes shaping the structure and content of the certification supply, their role varies considerably from one segment of this supply to another. In keeping with the policy of concertation adopted by the French State, the social partners are involved in every stage in the development of national certification procedures, but when it comes to branch certification matters, they are completely in command. In fact, the social partners are at the crux of an important issue in the field of certification: ensuring that the value of qualifications obtained on these lines and the specificities involved in each particular case will be properly recognized in occupational spheres.

In the framework of the national inter-professional agreement of 20th September 2003 on employees' lifelong access to vocational training (ANI), the social partners have launched discussions with a view to developing the validation of acquired experience (VAE), which focus strongly on the vocational qualification certificates (CQPs) they propose to introduce as a means of recognising qualifications acquired at the place of work. On the other hand, the National Vocational Certification Commission (CNCP) created in 2002 to improve the transparency and the coherence of vocational diplomas and qualifications recently published the first on-line version of its national directory of vocational certification procedures (the RNCP). As part of the "Transparency of qualifications" programme designed by the European Union to promote mobility, the contents of this directory will provide a useful tool for both youths and adults planning to improve their qualifications via continuing vocational training or lifelong training programs.

The above two events call for a guided tour of the world of vocational certification in France, starting with the contribution of the social partner to the development of diplomas and vocational qualifications and their diversification. The intervention of these players takes many different forms, reflecting the diversity of the world of vocational certification itself, which includes both publicly funded procedures and those run by private institutions.

Publicly funded certification schemes: the various modes of consultation

Training schemes of the first kind correspond to diplomas and qualifications delivered on behalf of the French State by the Ministry of Education and other ministries entrusted with variably extensive initial and continuing vocational training missions (see the inset on page 3). In this public certification arena, the State plays a central role in the development of the training supply, as regards both its overall architecture and the creation and abolition of diplomas. However, the social partners are consistently represented in all the various consultative bodies involved at every stage in the procedure.

The idea of including members of occupational spheres, which dates back to 1948 in the case of State educational diplomas, was implemented in 1972 by creating employers' and employees' benches within the consultative vocational commissions (CPCs). These players account for 50% of the members of the CPCs, State representatives for one quarter, and the remaining members are "qualified persons", including representatives of the teachers' unions.

The scope of these commissions dealing with vocational diplomas is quite variable. The Ministry of National Education is involved in 17 CPCs, for instance, some of which are extremely extensive (the "Metallurgy" CPC deals with more than 170 diplomas), whereas others cover a fairly narrow range (the "Personal care" CPC deals with only about ten diplomas). The Ministry of Employment is responsible for only six CPCs, each of which covers quite a wide range of competences, however. The meetings of these commissions are attended by employers and employees from the most representative branches. Apart

INSTANCES IN WHICH THE SOCIAL PARTNERS ARE CONSULTED

(all acronyms have been translated into English in the main article):

- CIC • Commission interprofessionnelle consultative.
- CNCP • Commission nationale de la certification professionnelle.
- CNESER • Commission nationale de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche.
- CPC • Commission professionnelle consultative.
- CPN • Commission pédagogique nationale.
- CPNEF • Commission paritaire nationale pour l'emploi et la formation.
- CTH • Commission technique d'homologation.
- Other acronyms:
 - AFCI • Assemblée des chambres françaises de commerce et d'industrie.
 - ANI • Accord national interprofessionnel du 20 septembre 2003 relatif à l'accès des salariés à la formation tout au long de la vie professionnelle.
 - APCM • Assemblée permanente des chambres de métiers.
 - CIF • Congé individuel de formation.
 - CQP • Certificat de qualification professionnelle.
 - DIF • Droit individuel à la formation.
 - DUT • Diplôme universitaire de technologie.
 - RNCP • Répertoire national des certifications professionnelles.
 - VAE • Validation des acquis de l'expérience.

from a few rare exceptions, each CPC usually covers more than one occupational branch. A system of sub-commissions makes it possible to address the needs for certification in more specific fields of activity. The automotive, aircraft and electronics industries' vocational certification requirements are examined separately by three of the nine sub-commissions set up by the Ministry of National Education's "Metallurgy" CPC, for instance.

In the case of short professionalising higher educational diplomas (DUTs), consultation with employers and employees (elected in most cases on a branch representation basis) takes place in the framework of national pedagogical commissions (CPNs). These commissions are responsible for ensuring that the main lines of the national programme are applied in the various local implementations introduced by educational establishments. The only continuous monitoring of this kind which occurs at university level is that applied to the DUT courses. The other professionalising diplomas are not subject to any scrutiny once they have been created, apart from the four-yearly re-assessment procedure they have to undergo. Before being launched, each specialty leading to a diploma has to be authorized by the central authorities, namely by the Ministry for Higher Education, after consultation with a national instance, the National Commission for Higher Education and Research (CNESER), which includes inter-professional representatives of the social partners. However, it is up to each university to take the initiative of creating specialised diplomas. New diplomas are set up in variably close consultation with representatives of local economic stakeholders, such as groups of firms, Chambers of Commerce and employers' guilds, and sometimes with territorial authorities, but workers' trade unions are almost never consulted in this case.

Vocational bachelor's degrees ("licences professionnelles") are drawn up *in situ* before being officially endorsed by the Ministry, subject to the approval of the CNESER, and although procedures for supervising these new diplomas have been set up experimentally, they operate on an overall basis rather than focusing on individual fields of specialisation. The representatives of the social partners attending meetings of the CPNs, who participated actively in the debates on issues relating to the creation of vocational bachelor's degrees, deplored the fact that they were neither consulted prior to the approval of these degree courses nor involved in the follow-up procedures. They took this opportunity of pointing out on this occasion that the continued undermining of the competence of the CPNs might lead to DUT diplomas being marginalised in the new range of higher educational diplomas resulting from the so-called LMD (bachelor's – master's – doctorate) reform.

From the branches to inter-professional co-ordination

Although branch representation has many advantages from the point of view of the familiarity of branch representatives with the issues involved in qualifications, there are also some arguments to the contrary. Some activities, such as administrative work and some commercial occupations, cut across all the branches of activity. The social partners generally pay less attention to qualifications in fields of activity which are not central to a specific branch, partly because cross-sectoral occupations of this kind are seldom represented during the decision-making process by suitably competent spokesmen.

The development of firms providing several branches with specialised services in fields such as computer technology, cleaning, communication, etc. has nevertheless resulted in the arrival of new participants on the scene who stand to gain considerably from entering the vocational certification arena and defending and promoting the key occupations on which their activities are based by participating in the setting up of new diplomas, so as to reinforce their identity and their right to constitute an occupational branch of its own. Changes of this kind mean that it is necessary to regularly re-think the structure of CPCs and the list of employer/employee organisations represented therein.

At two French ministries (the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Labour), consultative inter-professional commissions (CICs) have been set up to handle general questions about the structure of diplomas, such as the reasons for running level V diplomas like the CAP and BEP, or for creating vocational baccalauréats, etc. Inter-professional employer/employee representatives can also express their opinions here about how the CPCs should develop (how they could be re-grouped, how their scope could be re-defined, etc.) as well as about the needs arising for greater coordination between CPCs to cope with cross-sectoral occupational specialities such as those mentioned above.

Lastly, representatives of employers' and employees' unions attend the meetings of three bodies (two CICs and the CNESER) as part of the inter-professional contingent, and those of 42 CPCs and CPNs as part of the occupational branch delegation. Most sectors of activity have indeed long been targeted by the certification procedures controlled by the Ministry of National Education and the Ministry of Employment. New occupations, such as those in the field of the environment and services such as those provided by home helpers, mediators and event organisers, have recently emerged which have led to three or four ministries being regularly contacted

in parallel by employers' associations and occupational groups. There are logical reasons for this situation: the initial thinking behind certification procedures and the uses to which they are put is not necessarily identical from one ministry to another. Certification processes can therefore be complementary without necessarily being competitive. However, the present set-up sometimes generates several projects focusing on the same occupational fields, and this can result in some redundancy among qualifications.

Since the 2002 law on social modernisation, which states that vocational certificates can be included in the National Directory of Occupational Certification (RNCP), on condition there exists a consultative body of the CPC type catering for these diplomas, the modes of intervention of occupational representatives have been tending to become more uniform. The issues under debate are also tending to converge: the parties involved are first discussing whether it is worth creating, revising or abolishing diplomas and qualifications, and then they address the details of the occupational standards on which they are to be based. The social partners generally play an important role at both stages: their assessment of the needs arising in their own sector will determine whether the proposals made by the technical working groups (in which they are free to participate quite actively) will be adopted or not. At the end of the process whereby certification standards are drawn up, a final meeting with the commission provides employers' and employees' representatives with an opportunity of expressing their opinion publicly. Failure to reach a consensus does not mean that a project has to be abandoned, since the ministry responsible has the final right of decision. However, it is always best to obtain the agreement of at least the main branch representatives involved, since these players can promote the uptake of new diplomas by adopting voluntaristic policies and communication strategies, for example.

Privately run certification schemes

Besides State certification schemes, many privately run systems have also developed during the last 20 years, often in the context of continuing vocational training, which was promoted by the 1971 legislation. These certification schemes mostly, if not all, involve training courses designed for adults needing to acquire qualifications which are properly recognised on the labour market. In this case, the training providers are of various kinds: some of them (such as the continuing vocational training departments at universities) depend on public educational institutions, while others are associated with the Chambers or with networks set up by various branches (such as Building and Public Works, Automotive Repair, Transport, etc.), and others are completely independent.

Vocational certification procedures and consultative instances

Vocational certification procedures in France are of several kinds: diplomas and vocational qualifications delivered by State authorities via four "certifying ministries"; public and privately run qualification schemes, which have to be duly registered (upon application) by the CNCP in the National Directory of vocational certification procedures (RNCP); and the CQP certificates delivered by the CPNEF commissions.

There are four "certifying ministries" endowed with consultative instances responsible for updating the range of diplomas they deliver:

- Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research: 17 CPCs and 13 sub-commissions dealing with secondary education; 17 CPNs dealing with short higher educational paths; 1 CNESER dealing with long higher educational paths.
- Ministry of Employment, Labour and Social Cohesion: 6 CPCs and 27 specialised commissions.
- Ministry of Food and Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Affairs: 1 CPC and 15 sub-commissions.
- Ministry for Youth, Sport and Associations: 1 CPC and 2 sub-commissions.

Some vocational training certificates are also delivered by ministries not responsible for CPCs, such as the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry for Transport and the Infrastructure.

Thanks to the strictly defined homologation procedure involved, the certificates delivered by all these bodies, which are known as "homologated qualifications", are by now widely recognised. At first, the National Technical Commission (CTH), which includes inter-professional representatives of the social partners in addition to State representatives and qualified persons, used to homologate qualifications and allocate them to specific levels. This facilitated negotiations about the qualifications featuring in collective agreements and in the rules governing access to the French civil service. Since 2003, the homologation procedure has been replaced by a system involving application for inclusion in the RNCP directory, which has similar effects.

A new mode of certification based purely on the legitimacy of professionals

In addition to State diplomas and homologated qualifications, there exists another mode of certification, which is based entirely on the legitimacy of employers' and employees' representatives. This mode includes the vocational qualification certificates (CQPs) first created in 1987 by the Union of Metallurgical Industries and Occupations (UIMM), based on a circular issued by the Ministry of Labour in 1986. It gradually spread to more than 30 other branches, and by 2002, there existed more than 400 CQPs. These certificates have been mushrooming during the last few years, as a large number of initiatives have been launched by many different branches on these lines.

Since the social partners in each branch are those who make the decisions about the skills required and the qualifications awarded in this case, these modes of certification differ considerably from

" the certificates delivered by all these bodies, which are known as "homologated qualifications", are by now widely recognised "

those involving State intervention. They are quite heterogeneous in terms of how the standards and modes of assessment are adopted, since each branch is free to make its own decisions here. The respective contributions of the employees and the workers' unions to setting up a CQP tend to vary considerably, both within each branch and from one branch to another. The only obligation imposed on projects for creating a CQP is that they must be approved by a National Commission for Employment and Vocational Training (CPNEF).

Since CQPs are based on the needs of productive spheres and designed to improve the match between the workforce available and the skills required in some types of jobs, they escape much of the logic underlying the French State educational system. They still have links with this system, however, since they are often complementary to the public vocational training supply. In particular, these certificates are now awarded at the outcome of qualification contracts, which are alternance training contracts accessible to those with initial vocational training diplomas. The purpose of CQPs soon became two-fold, however, since they now target populations other than beginners on the labour market, as in the field of metalworking, where they serve rather to qualify workers undergoing continuing training. It was in this spirit that the metalworking sector conducted an experimental programme in 2002 enabling experienced workers to obtain CQPs on the basis of previously acquired experience (VAE).

Most CQPs have been created without any applications being filed for State homologation. They are therefore neither listed in the RNCP directory nor rated in the nomenclature of training levels. Not being listed or rated is less serious, however, than with other forms of certification, since CQPs are recognised by the branch as soon as they have been adopted by the social partners. This situation therefore seems likely to persist, especially as the employers' representatives are strongly challenging the right of the State to be responsible for validating these certificates resulting from a process of social bargaining.

Towards the bridges required

Before we come to the end of this guided tour of the modes of certification in France, it is worth mentioning some possible future developments. First there are projects to improve the ways in which the social partners are consulted about State certification procedures. With a view to harmonising the decision-making processes, it has been suggested that closely concerted efforts between the branches should be set up in an inter-ministerial setting. However, it is also up to the social partners themselves to take steps

to present the various bodies in which they are represented with more coherent branch strategies. The CPNEFs could no doubt play a decisive role in this way in the future. The fact that the social partners are obliged to discuss qualification issues regularly provides them with a real opportunity of drawing up an overall picture of the certification requirements, from CAP and BEP level up to the highest diploma levels, and allotting each diploma to a level on the hierarchy of qualifications specific to each branch.

The second type of predictable development involves defining CQPs without any reference to the occupational branches. Some of the orchestrators have been finding the present approach too narrow for the qualification processes to be able to develop harmoniously. Since too many CQPs giving similar qualifications are tending to emerge, it has been suggested that it might be worth introducing some inter-professional CQPs. The first step in this direction has been the idea expressed in the ANI agreements that the tools for homogenizing CQPs and giving them a more logical structure should be defined at inter-professional level. Some people have gone as far as to suggest that a sort of cross-sectional CPNEF should be created for dealing with inter-professional CQPs. It will emerge from the discussions about VAE issues now taking place both within the branches and at inter-professional level what the social partners think about the uses made of the various modes of certification. The decisions made about these issues are bound to affect the strategies used to adapt State certification procedures and those controlled by the social partners to the various types of users in need of qualifications.

The last point as far as the outlook is concerned focuses on the paths taken by individuals, who are constantly being urged to continue acquiring qualifications throughout their lives. For this to be possible, bridges will have to be built between the various certification spheres. The inter-ministerial efforts launched on these lines a few years ago are expected to continue in the broader framework of the CNCP. It is generally agreed, however, that this is going to be a tricky exercise: it will require a consensus to be reached about the specific nature of the various modes of certification, and the value of these modes will have to be recognized in both vocational training and occupational circles. It is to be hoped that the discussions about the value attributed to previously acquired experience in the ANI agreements will provide an opportunity for re-assessing how the various modes of certification affect people's individual careers as well how they are used at human resource management level, and thus for addressing the question of their recognition.

Chantal Labruyère (Céreq)

Further reading

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- "Les certificats de qualification professionnelle" (Vocational qualification certificates), P. Guilloux, F. Manceaux, V. Michelet and H. Perker, Centre Inffo, "Guide technique" series, 2001.
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- "Reconnaissance et validation des acquis dans le contexte de la formation" (Recognition and validation of prior knowledge in vocational training), A.-M. Charraud, *Séquences*, special issue no. 2, Céreq, February 1999.
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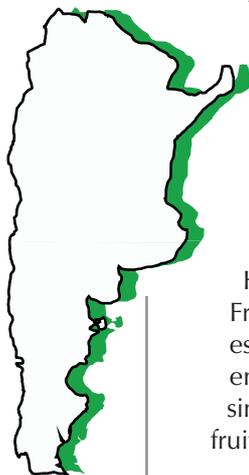
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Briefing

Updates

In the framework of an international technical co-operation programme in which Céreq has been engaged for several years with CEIL-PIETTE (*Centro de estudios e investigaciones laborales- Programa de investigaciones económicas sobre tecnología, trabajo y empleo*), an Argentinian research centre working in the field of social science, work and employment, Jean-Louis Kirsch from Céreq chaired a symposium on qualification and the validation of experience acquired. This symposium, which took place in Buenos Aires in November 2005, was attended by about thirty participants from the National Institute of Technological Education and the Argentinian Ministry of Labour, as well as by students from CEIL-PIETTE.



A new law on vocational training was promulgated in Argentina on September 8, 2005. This law addresses several issues which link up with those of current concern in France: the existence of a national directory of qualification procedures, the development of lifelong vocational training, the validation of experience acquired, etc. However, contrary to what occurs in France, Argentinian vocational training establishments and the provincial states enjoy a high level of autonomy. These similarities and differences gave rise to some fruitful debates.

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- ✓ The CEIL-PIETTE internet site: www.ceil-piette.gov.ar.

The theme adopted at the eleventh session of "Université de la formation, de l'éducation et de l'orientation" (University for vocational training, education and career guidance) was "**Discrimination. What facts ? What responses?**". This meeting, which took place in November 2005 in Artigues-près-Bordeaux, was organised by a scientific committee headed by Thierry Berthet. It included lectures and round table discussions led by people from various circles, including writer and genetics specialist Albert Jacquard, sociologist and demographer Claude-Valentin Marie, who is Vice-President of HALDE (The High Authority for the Struggle Against Discrimination and for Equality), Bertrand Schwartz, an emeritus Professor who was formerly inter-ministerial delegate for the occupational and social integration of young people in difficulty and was also appointed as an official representative of the French Ministry of Labour, Josep Maria Terricabras, Professeur of philosophy at the University of Gerona (Spain) and Michael Bezikofer, project controller for France at the European Social Fund (ESF). The last day of this meeting was devoted to European and regional reports on the "Equal" programme designed to fight all forms of discrimination and inequality in work and employment spheres. Five "Equal" projects being carried out in the Aquitaine region were presented.

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- ✓ The UFEO internet site: www.maisondelapromotionsociale.org.
- ✓ Céreq's associated centre for the Aquitaine region: www.cervl.u-bordeaux.fr/cracc.htm



The project entitled **"Time for learning. How to organise time to gain access to vocational training"** launched by Accor Services, the association Algora, Céreq and the Nice educational district's "GRETA" Group for Tourism and the Hotel Industry is about how to handle time more efficiently. This project, which is part of the European Social Fund's "Equal" programme combating discrimination and inequality in work and employment spheres, culminated in December 2005 in a meeting in Paris. In his opening speech, the sociologist Jean Viard recalled that in 1900, workers had a life expectancy of 500 000 hours and spent about 200 000 of these hours working. Nowadays, we can hope to live for 700 000 hours, 67 000 of which are spent working and 30 000 studying.

The interviews carried out by Céreq as part of the "Time for learning" project showed that although vocational training was felt by the respondents to be essential, the time it takes was viewed differently, depending on their gender, age and personal situation. "Time for learning" can be understood in terms of building a lifelong pathway, but it should also be lined up in people's everyday lives with the time they spend on their work and on their personal lives. In conclusion, Pierre Le Douaron, from the French Ministry of Labour's General Delegation for Employment and Vocational Training (DGEFP), recalled that since the 2004 legislation was passed, time has become one of the points on which negotiations between employers and employees focus.



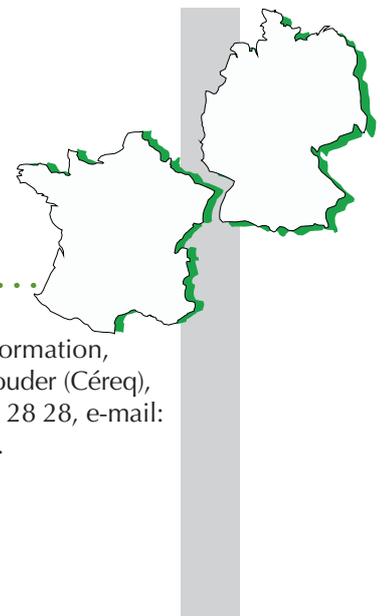
- ✓ For further information, contact Agnès Checcaglini (Céreq), phone: 04 91 13 28 28, e-mail: checcaglini@cereq.fr.
- ✓ Documents about this meeting and the proceedings can be obtained on the internet site www.letempsdapprendre.fr.
- ✓ For further information about the "Time for learning" project's partners: www.accorservices.com, www.algora.org et www.greta.ac-nice.fr.
- ✓ For further information about the EQUAL programme projects: www.equal-france.com, www.equal-equilibre.com, www.cityctac.org.

For the second year running, the seminar held in December 2005 brought together members of the **Institut Technik und Bildung (ITB) and Céreq**. The latest meeting, which was subsidised by the Franco-German University of Saarbrücken, was held in Frankfurt, at the German Institute for International Pedagogical Research. The aim of these events is to exchange information about the approaches and programmes used by the two organisations and to draw up common projects. This time, the focus was on youth transition to work, the approaches used in various sectors to analyse the needs for qualifications and the methods used to assess the content of occupational activities, and the role of apprenticeship in vocational training and transition to work. There was also some discussion about the recent initiatives launched by the European Union with a view to defining a European Qualification Framework.

The accent was placed on this occasion on the difference between the quantitative approach adopted by Céreq, as opposed to the more qualitative methods used by the ITB. Although these approaches are quite different, they make it possible to view the topics addressed from different angles. This complementarity may lead in the future to setting up joint projects on themes of common interest, which still remain to be defined, and producing joint assessments of various European initiatives in the field of vocational training and qualification procedures.



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"time has become one of the points on which negotiations between employers and employees focus"



Les organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés. Acteurs du changement des comportements de formation des petites entreprises

[Accredited social partners' bodies

collecting and regulating funds for training contribute to changing small firms' vocational training practices]

> Elyes Bentabet, Michel Théry (editors)

RELIEF no. 11, December 2005

Céreq has been examining the contribution of "organismes paritaires collecteurs agréés" (OPCAs: accredited social partners' bodies collecting and regulating funds for training) to the development of vocational training at small French firms. The results of this survey are presented here in the following four sections:

- the first section describes the strategies used by OPCAs at firms with less than 50 employees on the payroll. Although small firms may contribute very little to the continuing vocational training market, a multitude of formal and informal training practices are actually taking place at these firms;
- the second part deals with the close contacts maintained by OPCAs with small firms at the local level. The question as to how occupational and territorial branches, national policies and regional policies all link up far as continuing vocational training is concerned is discussed in this context;
- the third part deals with the role of employees at OPCAs in order to determine how they contribute to changing small firms' vocational training habits;
- the last part focuses on the specificities of continuing vocational training funding in France. Although large firms mostly handle staff training themselves, the smallest ones often apply to OPCAs for this purpose. The mediating role played by these organisations therefore enables them to implement their vocational training policies.

Retournement démographique et gestion des compétences dans les établissements publics de recherche finalisée

[Demographic change and competence management at public applied research establishments]

> Agnès Legay, Sylvie Monchatre

NEF no. 20, November 2005

Based on the numbers expected to retire from work in the near future, public research establishments are particularly exposed to the forthcoming "demographic shock". Agnès Legay and Sylvie Monchatre from Céreq examine this question here, based on a survey carried out at three State-owned industrial and commercial establishments and three public scientific and technological research establishments. It is extremely important for these institutions to be able to go on attracting science graduates. However, setting up attractive policies involves updating competence management methods and determining exactly what competences are available internally so as to optimise recruitment practices. Competence management means defining all the various occupations carried out, from the basic research work to its applications, as well as the expert skills available and the vocational training requirements, so as to diversify the career prospects available. It is necessary to take into account all the facets of applied research as well as the institutional objectives, and to find ways of stopping the slow-down in wage growth patterns. In this context, there has been a move to find ways of reforming the modes of assessment used among public research scientists. In the end, these establishments will be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of competences. However, since the funds with which they are going to be provided and the contracts they are going to sign are quite unpredictable, it is difficult for them to plan ahead and specify what positions and what skills they are going to require.

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"Déclassement": de quoi parle-t-on ? A propos de jeunes bacheliers professionnels issus de spécialités industrielles.

["Downgrading": what does this mean when talking about youths with vocational baccalauréats in industrial specialities?]

> Henri Eckert

Net.doc no. 19, November 2005

The author first describes what he calls "the fortunes of a word" by relating the history of the word "downgrading" and the meanings associated with it in studies on youth transition to work. He then assesses the relevance of the possible uses of the term as a means of describing the situation of young people who enter the labour market with vocational baccalauréats in industrial specialities, based on the statements made by them ten years later about their career paths since leaving initial vocational training.

INTERNET "Net.Doc"

La ségrégation des hommes et des femmes dans les métiers : entre héritage scolaire et construction sur le marché du travail

[The occupational segregation of men and women: a heritage resulting from educational segregation combined with labour market practices]

> Thomas Couppié and Dominique Epiphane

The pattern of male and female distribution among the various occupations does not result simply from the cleavage between the sexes which starts at school level with diverging orientations, leading to different fields of study. Educational segregation is partly converted into occupational segregation when people enter the labour market. However, in many occupations, another segregating mechanism not involving educational qualifications but relating to the job matching process also comes into play.

Les salaires des hommes et des femmes en début de vie active : des sources de disparité variables selon les professions

[Men's and women's wages at the start of their careers: the reasons for the disparities depend on the gender segregation inherent to their occupations]

> Thomas Couppié, Arnaud Dupray and Stéphanie Moullet

The authors of this paper analyse the disparities between the wages of men and women after three years on the labour market, depending on their occupations, the extent to which these occupations involve gender segregation, and how this situation came about. In all the occupational groups studied, wage discrimination against women tends to be a matter of individuals' professional situation rather than being due to the productive skills they have acquired via their education or their professional experience.

Au fur et à mesure qu'elles se construisent, les trajectoires professionnelles divergent entre les sexes : l'exemple belge

[Occupational trajectories gradually diverge with time between the sexes: the case of Belgium]

> Claire Gavray

Early occupational trajectories tend to diverge increasingly with time between the sexes. On the one hand, gender-related differences in the timing of careers and in current demographic and family patterns continue to influence the start of young people's professional careers. On the other hand, the differences in the quality of employment available to young people depending on their sex, are to the detriment of women. All in all, the differences existing between professional situations continue to

increase with time, not only between the sexes but also between groups of women and between social groups.

Egalité des chances ou des résultats : l'influence du genre

[Equal chances or equal results: the effects of gender]

> Philippe Lemistre

Equal chances at school are obviously not the same thing as equal chances of access to the labour market. Although parents' occupations have similar effects on the level of education reached by young people of both sexes, most occupations favour boys' chances of obtaining executive level jobs. In fact, boys are more strongly affected, either favourably or unfavourably, than girls by their parents' occupational situation, especially by parental unemployment.

Les temps de l'insertion : itinéraires de jeunes femmes de milieu populaire

[The transition to work period: the itineraries of girls of modest origins]

> Armelle Testenoire

In what ways do the transition to work itineraries of girls of modest origins differ? The biographical approach used here shows how the familial and professional histories intersect. The patterns of interference and alternation observed reflect the modes of socialisation at work in the families from which these girls originated, as regards both gender-related and other issues. Among those with similar qualification levels and social origins, the differences between trajectories seem to involve a chain of events.

Décentralisation de l'éducation et de la formation professionnelle : compétences sans moyens, moyens sans compétences ?

[The decentralisation of education and vocational training: competencies without means or means without competencies ?]

> Louis Mallet

The process of decentralisation is reputed to have completely transformed the French political and administrative landscape. In the present critical analysis of this process, which focuses on the field of education and vocational training, the author presents the opposite side of the coin, and shows how incoherent the choice of the fields and modes of action transferred from central State control to the territorial collectivities has been. He suggests some original new ways of setting up regional policies by recombining the fields of competence transferred and improving some of the ways in which local governance is carried out by collectivities.



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