

INEQUALITIES IN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

The modernisation of the education system between 1960 and the mid 1990s supported the economic and societal transformation in a positive way and contributed to improving the circumstances of the most disadvantaged communities. This evolution has now ceased to continue. There are numerous failures in relation to the period of mandatory schooling and inequalities in outcomes are very clearly correlated to social, cultural, and familial circumstances. The results of pupils entering into their first year of primary education are highly variable across the social spectrum, and the gap widens even further when students leave the education system.

Furthermore, the quality of the communication between schools and parents of students from disadvantaged backgrounds is often insufficient and even strained owing to their own experience in the education system and their concerns that they are dealing with an institution charged with imparting knowledge which they do not possess themselves.

Geographical divisions tend to aggravate these inequalities, making it more complex to deal with them. Large urban areas, such as Paris and its surroundings, where social and educational segregation is more marked, tend to suffer from such divisions to a greater degree.

Constant improvements in the general level of knowledge among the population is a fundamental issue of ever increasing complexity for contemporary societies, particularly in the area of technology. Access for all to a good level of education is a condition not only of economic participation, but also social and civic engagement.

France's current performance in terms of education is disappointing: while the education system serves half of students well, 20% of students are still very weak at the end of mandatory education, a significantly greater proportion than that found among our main partners. What is more, the situation has seriously declined over the past ten years.

Our education system has therefore ceased to be a contributing factor in reducing inequalities. However, this relatively recent "breakdown" has deep roots in the hesitations and incoherence of the democratisation led under the system that requires all students must attend the same type of middle school upon leaving primary school. The Economic, Social and Environmental Council wishes to highlight the urgency of a renewed vision for education and a constant effort to ensure an effective and consistent improvement in education and qualification levels across the population.

« Mandatory schooling must at least ensure that every student has the means to acquire a basic common level of knowledge and skills that are indispensable to completing their education successfully, pursuing their training, creating their personal and professional future and succeeding in society »

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Xavier NAU

Professor of Philosophy
Adviser to the CFDT Trade Union Group
Member of the section of education, culture and communication

Section Contact: ecc@lecese.fr - Phone +33(0)1.44.43.62.57 - www.lecese.fr
Rapporteur Contact: Xavier Nau : 33+(0)6.08.17.18.82 - xavier.nau@lecese.fr

ENSURING SUCCESS FOR ALL IN PRIMARY AND MIDDLE SCHOOL

- Strengthening support for school transitions
- Support for primary schools in their mission
- Setting out coherent objectives for curricula with the common basic level of education
- Effective organisation of the school system into cycles

ENSURING SUCCESS FOR ALL ACROSS THE WHOLE TERRITORY

- A renewal of the territorial dimension of education and a concentration resources
- Access for parents to school in priority education sectors
- Renew the school card scheme, with varying resource allocation depending on the needs in the community

IMPROVING TEACHER TRAINING AND VALUING THEIR PROFESSION

- Professionalisation of training for future teachers
- Recognition of the various roles of the teaching profession
- A large-scale professional development initiative for staff

NATIONAL LEADERSHIP OF THE PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE INDEPENDENCE OF SCHOOLS

17%

the percentage in variation between the performance of French students depending on their socio economic background. The OECD average is 14%

- Instituting teachers councils or boards of management as the backbone of the development project
- Maintaining strict requirements for equality between schools across the country
- Setting up teachers councils in private schools under contract

15% of students have serious difficulties from the very beginning of their education

20% of young French people are below Level 2 (out of 6) at age fifteen, according to the PISA international study. 15% were in the same situation ten years later

18% of young people leave school without a qualification

THE CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL REFORM

- Allocation of the necessary time to design and implement the reforms
- Carrying out experimentation and evaluation before any generalisations are made
- Coherent and consistent implementation of reform