

Working towards universal secondary education (1985-2001)

*Paul Esquieu, Pascale Poulet-Coulibando**

Since the mid-eighties, the French Education authorities' unilateral drive to make secondary education universal has yielded significant results. In 2001, 70% of the young generations concerned attended school till the terminal year of secondary school, against 35% in 1985, and 38% stayed on and obtained a further education diploma against 15% only in 1980.

This progress is based on the fact that enrolment in the first cycle of secondary schooling (British sixth to ninth grades) is now near-universal, with 97% of young people in France attending 9th grade (French "troisième"), an achievement that was further boosted between 1985 and 1990 by increased flows of students enrolling in general and technical second cycles of secondary education, which thus witnessed a tremendous influx of students. These trends were dampened somewhat come 1993-94, with a fall in enrolment in the general education stream exacerbated by demographic developments, with signs of a slowdown in the increase in enrolment in further education among younger students.

Between 1975 and 1985, the introduction of a one-size-fits-all first cycle of secondary education didn't lead to significant changes in the educational choices. Conversely,

however, the past fifteen years have witnessed substantial changes. Come the mid-eighties, the authorities' target was for 80% of young people to finish secondary education by the year 2000,

the aim being to significantly raise the level of education of young people and better prepare them for the changes taking place in the economy, against a backdrop of particularly high unemployment

* Paul Esquieu and Pascale Poulet-Coulibando are senior members of the Planning and Development department of the French Ministry of Education.

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among school and college leavers. The formalisation of this aim led to a period of major and sudden transformation of students' educational choices.

Since 1985, enrolment rates have boomed

In 1985, the French Education authorities decided to open up the general, technical and vocational streams of the second cycle of secondary education (see *box 1*). The results were spectacular: in 2001, 70% of young

people reached the 12th grade (French "Terminale"), i.e. baccalaureate level, compared with only 35% around 1985 (see *box 2*). Although the initial target enshrined in the 1989 law governing higher education has not actually been met, this constitutes a tremendous progress: the number of people remaining in school up to the 12th grade has effectively doubled. The other core target of the 1989 law governing higher education, a reduction in the early school leaving was achieved: the number of young people in that position was nearly divided by two since 1985.

This progress, which has been stalled since 1994, has had deep repercussions on the level of education of the French population. Thus in the latest population census, carried out in March 1999, 30% of the people aged 25 or above claimed that they had a baccalaureate certificate, versus 22% in 1990 and 13% in 1975. The yearly data supplied by INSEE's Employment surveys confirms that the level of education attained by the various generations involved at the end of their studies has risen. Nearly 38% of young people leaving the education system nowadays hold a secondary education diploma and less than 8% leave without any diploma whatsoever. In 1980, the prevalence of both groups was more or less equal (15%) (see *figure 1*). The rise in the level of education has been particularly marked among young women. In March 2001, 38% of women aged 25 to 29 having finished their studies declared that they had a secondary school qualification versus only 15% twenty years ago. For men in that age group, the corresponding figures are 32% and 12% respectively.

Thanks to this progress, France has partly caught up with the levels attained by other developed countries. If one looks at the segment of the population having at least reached the second cycle of secondary education (the indicator retained by the OECD in its Focus on Education), France's progress over the past thirty years, which can be gauged by comparing the 25-34 age group to their 55-64 years old elders, is very high, though not yet sufficient to equal the most advanced countries in the field (see *figure 2*). However, it should be noted that the methods used by different countries to

Box 1

The main measures implemented since 1985

The main measures that have been implemented since 1985 in connection with the cycles of secondary education are:

- Introduction of a *vocational baccalaureate* and replacement of the post-seventh grade CAP by new technology courses (thus pulling the school vocational stream upwards so as to provide the option to access education French level IV through it);
- *The 1987 plan for the future of the national education system* introduced by Minister René Monory defined targets to be achieved by the year 2000 in terms of enrolment, school leaving and the recruitment of teachers;
- *The 1987 reform of apprenticeship* means that apprentices can now go on to obtain vocational diplomas at all levels, following a path that is similar to the standard education streams;
- *The 1989 law governing higher education* restated the target of bringing 80 % of new generations to baccalaureate level and of endeavouring to avoid letting young people leave the education system without qualifications

(French "VI" an "Vbis" levels). It also dealt with the organisation of secondary education, which was to be organised into 'cycles' and with the organisation of educational establishments, (which were instructed to devise specific and customised educational plans), as well as with the recruitment and training of teachers (creation of IUFM, launch of a recruitment campaign spanning several years);

- *The educational overhaul of France's lycées*: from the 1992 academic year, tenth grade, which was undifferentiated since the early eighties, became a threshold year, a preparatory stage for the new general education and technology streams in the eleventh grade (French "première"), with the aim being to forge a more marked profile for the high-school students intent on pursuing either stream;
- *The 1996 reforms of the first cycle of secondary education*: introduction of the three separate streams, with the aim of better consolidating schooling achievements and enrolment from the sixth grade and up, implementation of a more customised and flexible education experience, so as to secure near universal access to ninth grade.

Box 2**Definitions relating to the baccalaureate**

The following three indicators should be distinguished:

● **Baccalaureate pass rate:** this is the proportion of those obtaining the baccalaureate diploma relative to the number who sat the examination (78.8% in June 2001).

● **Proportion of a generation holding a baccalaureate diploma:** this is the proportion of holders of a baccalaureate diploma in total population at same age. This figure is obtained by calculating, for each age group, the ratio of the number of holders of a baccalaureate diploma relative to the total population in that age group, and adding up these ratios.

The age groups that are taken into consideration are as follows: the 17-23 years age group, for the general and technology streams, and the 18 to 24 years age group for the vocational stream, given that enrolment [in the courses leading up to the baccalaureate] is deferred by a year for the latter.

● **Proportion of a generation reaching baccalaureate level:** this is the proportion of young people in total population at same age that enter the final year of an educational stream leading up to a baccalaureate or equivalent diploma (69.5% in 2000-2001); this is the last indicator stipulated in law no. 89-486 of the 10th of July 1989 governing higher education (see box 1).

measure the secondary education achievements are not homogenous. The French tend to focus on that segment of the population claiming to possess a diploma from the second cycle of secondary education, i.e. a CAP, a BEP or a baccalaureate, which does not strictly correspond to the inter-ministerial notion of 'qualification'. In terms of the number of people obtaining such diplomas, the progress achieved since the early eighties is most marked among young women : in March 2001, 79% of women aged 25 to 29 claimed to possess at least one diploma from the second cycle of secondary education, versus 50% twenty years before; in contrast, young men nowadays are only 18 points ahead

Figure 1 – Students now leaving the education system are more highly qualified than in the past

	1977-1978 ¹	1982-1983 ¹	1987-1988 ¹	1992-1993 ¹	1997-1998 ¹	1999-2000 ¹
Bachelor's degree, Masters, Doctorate or grande école diploma	53,000	51,000	72,000	101,000	151,000	157,000
DUT/BTS ²	24,000	37,000	57,000	75,000	94,000	90,000
Paramedical and social diplomas ²	26,000	21,000	14,000	17,000	19,000	18,000
Intermediate (2 nd year) university diploma (DEUG)	13,000	15,000	13,000	13,000	19,000	15,000
Total number of people obtaining a further education diploma	116,000	124,000	156,000	206,000	283,000	280,000
General education baccalaureate, Brevet supérieur [higher diploma of secondary education]	70,000	62,000	52,000	61,000	83,000	82,000
Technical and vocational baccalaureates	36,000	40,000	42,000	82,000	98,000	95,000
CAP/BEP, equivalents and other vocational diplomas	221,000			142,000	134,000	147,000
Total number of people obtaining a secondary education diploma	327,000			285,000	315,000	324,000
First cycle diploma (Brevet) alone	88,000	524,000 ³	430,000 ³	60,000	48,000	61,000
No diploma (or CEP)	207,000			112,000	105,000	98,000
Total number of people obtaining a High-school certificate (Brevet) or no diploma at all	295,000			172,000	153,000	159,000
<i>Of which: school leavers having reached CAP level (level V)</i>				105,000	96,000	101,000
<i>School leavers with no qualifications at all (level VI-Vb)</i>				67,000	57,000	58,000
Total number of people leaving the education system	738,000			663,000	751,000	763,000
<i>Primosortants (based on estimates from schools sources)</i>		750,000	680,000	656,000	784,000	779,000

1. For the sake of better statistical representation, the data shown is obtained by averaging out two consecutive groups. So for instance the figure for the number of students emerging from the educational system in 1999/2000 was obtained by adding up the figures for 1999 and 2000 and dividing the outcome by two.

2. Some technical college diplomas were ranked with paramedical and social diplomas in the seventies. However, since 1982, they have been ranked along with DUT/BTS diplomas.

3. Apprentices were not questioned about the end of their studies by the 1982 to 1989 INSEE Employment surveys ; the surveys do not provide any information about any diplomas prior to baccalaureate held by people leaving the educational system.

Sources : DPD, Ministère de la Jeunesse, de l'Éducation nationale et de la Recherche [the French Ministry of Education], based on INSEE's Employment surveys (1975-2001) and enrolment records.

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of those who finished their education in 1981 (78% versus 60%).

The changes that have taken place in secondary education

appear to reflect the education establishment's determination to ensure that current enrolment figures be as close as possible to the targets laid down by the

“ Monory plan ” in 1987 (see box 2). True, the rate of enrolment in the twelfth grade nowadays stands at 70% rather than the 74% that had been forecast by the plan. However, 62% of young people now get a French “baccalauréat” (see figure 3), which is above the original 58% target, due to a serious increase in the rate of success. As for the repartition between general, technological and vocational bachelors, it is almost perfectly in tune with the forecasts (see figure 4).

Figure 2 – Proportion of the population who reached the second cycle of secondary school in various countries (1999)

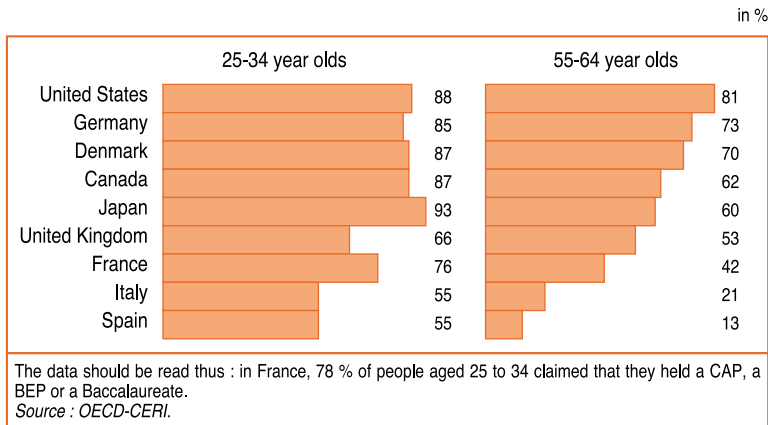
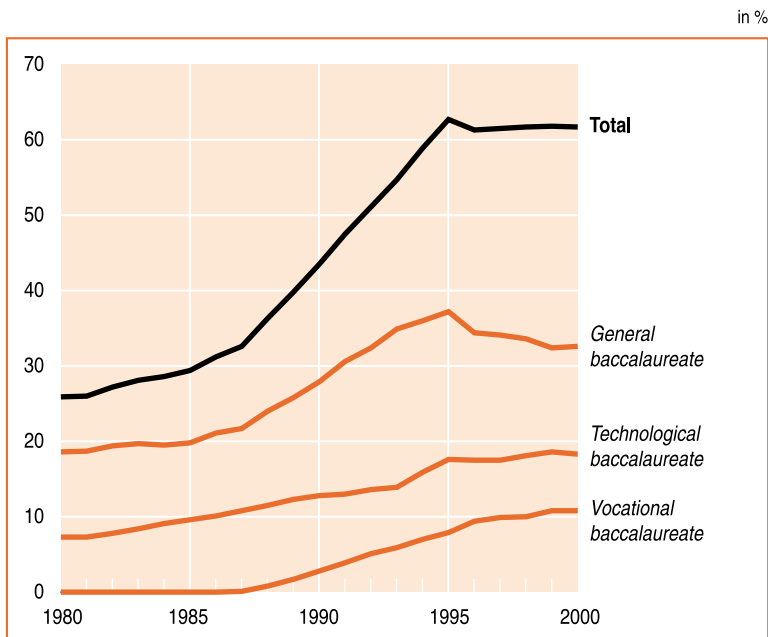


Figure 3 – Proportion of a given generation holding a baccalauréat¹



1. Refer to box 2 for a definition of this indicator.

Scope : mainland France.

The data should be read thus : in June 1990, 27.9 % of a given age group obtained a general baccalauréate, 12.8 % obtained a technological baccalauréate and 2.8 % obtained a vocational baccalauréate (see box 2).

Source : DPD, French Ministry of Education.

Almost all young people nowadays complete the first cycle of secondary education

During the second half of the eighties, the abolition of first-cycle ‘pre-vocational’ classes (and in particular pre-vocational level classes and preparatory training for apprenticeship), and the introduction of eighth and ninth grades in technology colleges (French “quatrièmes et troisièmes technologiques”), did away with the once ominous seventh grade threshold for education choices, enabling more young people to actually complete the first cycle of secondary education. The former pre-vocational courses, which were a prolongation of primary school finishing courses, left scholars little scope to continue their studies ; they were also rated as particularly difficult by teachers. Weeding out so many pupils from general secondary education come the end of the seventh grade (French “cinquième”) made France one of the countries where educational and career selection took place at the earliest age. Nowadays though, the vast majority of young people (close to 97% - see figure 5),

reach the end of the first cycle of secondary education, i.e. ninth grade, general or specialised (French “troisièmes générales et spécialisées – technologiques, d’insertion, adaptées –”).

While the trend for universal access to secondary education up to the ninth grade was most pronounced in the late eighties, the incorporation of the new educational streams into the first cycle of secondary education has recently provided a means of further integrating the various streams of the second cycle so that young people now have at least the same opportunity (if not the equal chances) to pursue their education further. The

quasi-universal enrolment in the general stream up to ninth grade some twenty five years down the line in a way marks the culmination of all the efforts to establish the first cycle of secondary education as a universal or at least a common educational experience.

This has contributed to raising the general level of education as well as reducing the number of people leaving the education system without a qualification, a phenomenon which during the early eighties occurred mostly during the first cycle of secondary education. The young people who leave nowadays without having gained a qualification (around 60,000 since 1994) are

mainly people who, come the end of the first cycle of secondary education, have not found an educational option appealing to them or meeting their particular ambitions. They tend to leave the education system after a short stint in vocational colleges (French “lycées professionnels”) or in apprenticeship (French “Centres de formation d’apprentis”), sometimes following a period of increasingly aggravated truancy.

The number of people leaving school before the age of 16 is marginal and in most cases this phenomenon seems due to highly specific circumstances: difficulties with existing institutions for severe physical handicaps, a recent arrival in France, an explosion of the family structure or hard delinquency.

The underlying reasons for young people leaving school early (French “sortants sans qualification”) were analysed within the scope of INSEE’s Employment surveys, by comparing the personal characteristics of the parents and siblings of the young people involved to those of young people from similar socio-economic backgrounds who had reached CAP-BEP level (French level “V”). The surveys disclose that, all other things being equal, these scholars’parents are typically unemployed or have

Figure 4 – The conclusions and forecasts of the Monory plan¹

	Position in 1986	Actual position in 2000	Forecast for 2000
in %			
Proportion of a generation accessing to baccalaureate level ²	36	70	74
Proportion of a generation holding baccalaureate ³	31	62	58
Breakdown of 100 baccalaureate holders:	100	100	100
General baccalaureate	67	52.5	52
Technical baccalaureate	33	29.5	31
Vocational baccalaureate	0	18	17
1. See box 1. 2. Proportion of people in a given age group having reached baccalaureate level i.e. the 12 th grade of secondary school (see box 2). 3. Proportion of people in a given age group that hold a baccalaureate diploma (see box 2). Source : DPD, France’s Ministry of Education.			

Figure 5 – More young people are reaching ninth grade¹

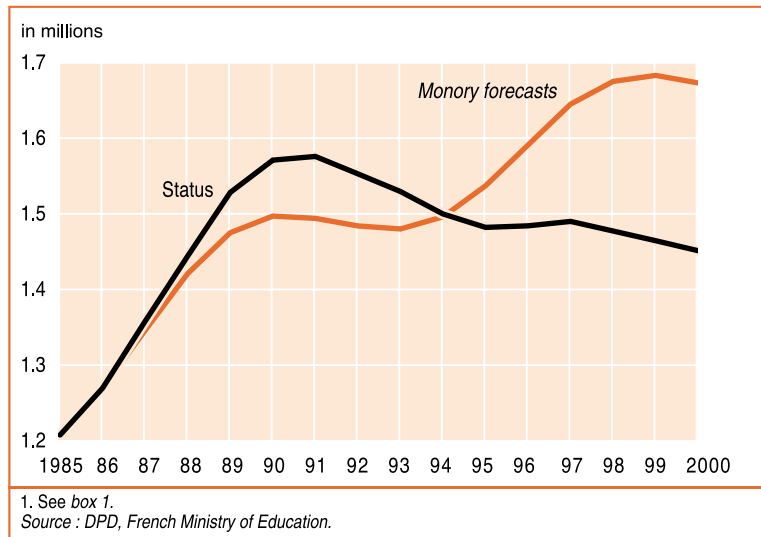
	1984/5	1990/1	1994/5	1999/2000	2000/1	2001/2
in %						
Ninth grade - all streams	70	93	94	96	97	97
Of which: general education stream	65	80	79	84	85	85
Of which: specialised streams	5	13	15	12	12	12
1. Proportion of young people reaching the end of the first cycle of secondary education, i.e. ninth grade (French “troisième”), be it in the general education, vocational, technology or special education (SEGPA) streams. Sources: Estimates of DPD, France’s Ministry of Education, based on surveys of student enrolment/numbers (DPD) and on population estimates (INSEE).						

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low incomes. Furthermore, the young people involved are likely to have lived their entire lives in the same impoverished neighbourhoods. These early school leavers stigmatize dysfunctions in the educative system, but this phenomenon can also be

credited to the increasing presence of “poverty pockets” in some districts. The 1999 population census results clearly demonstrate that unemployment has worsened substantially in disadvantaged urban neighbourhoods during the past decade.

Figure 6 – Number of students enrolled in general and technical second-cycle secondary education establishments: situation report and forecasts of the ‘Monory plan’¹



The growth of enrolment in the second cycle of secondary education: two successive phases

The trends for enrolment and choice of study streams in the second cycle of secondary education have followed two distinct phases over the period from 1985 to 2001.

Up to 1990, there are large numbers of scholars attending the first cycle of secondary education (they belong to the last generations born during the ‘thirty glorious years’), and for the most part they choose a general and technologic high schools (French “lycées généraux et technologiques”). This caused a considerable influx of pupils into the corresponding second cycles. In a few years, the proportion of the relevant generations enrolled in the tenth grade of general and technologic high schools (French “secondes générales et technologiques”) rose from 40% to 57%

Box 3

The impact of demographics and of the duration of schooling

In the late eighties, substantial demographic shortfalls were offset by an increase in enrolment

Between 1988/9 and 1993/4, study periods lengthened by over 0.2 years per annum, with increases in the rates of enrolment of more than 3 points per year between the ages of 18 and 22. This trend was operating on the large generations born in the late sixties at the tail end of the baby boom. However, during this same period, the smaller generations born between 1975 and 1977 were entering the first years of secondary education. Thus, on the one hand, the increase in the rates of enrolment of the larger generations resulted in an increase in the number

of students enrolled in secondary education of 110,000 students per year between 1987/8 and 1990/1. But on the other hand, the onset of the smaller subsequent generations resulted in falls of at least 100,000 students per year.

Since 1997, the duration of schooling has been falling and can no longer compensate for the demographic losses

The duration of the average study period in secondary education stopped increasing after 1994, and then, owing to the arrival of generations featuring lower rates of enrolment, the trend spread to the entire education system from 1997 onwards.

The generation featuring the longest average study period is the generation of 1977. This generation was marked by the exceptional baccalaureate performance of 1995. The greatest rates of enrolment were recorded when this generation reached the age of 18 (85% in 1995/6), 19 (72% in 1996/7) 22 (35% in 1999/2000), and finally 23 (26% of young people in this generation were enrolled in education in 2000/1).

Enrolment rates diminished after the passage of this generation, firstly at the age of 18, then 19, 20, 21 and 22 years old, while enrolment rates were still rising among older students.

and the number of students enrolled in these second cycles of secondary education increased by 370,000, i.e. 30%.

During the nineties, and particularly since 1993/1994, these trends have slowed down. This is due to the demographic downturn since 1990/1 (when the 1975 generation was just entering the second cycle of secondary education, i.e. tenth grade), followed by a slowing down in the increase of enrolment rates, and a tipping of the balance between the three education streams in favour of vocational programs. One of the consequences of this trend inversion was a drop in enrolment at general and technical high schools, which altogether lost some 120,000 scholars between 1991 and 2001. Thus, in spite of a period of faster than anticipated growth up to 1994, the number of students enrolled in secondary education failed to reach the targets enunciated in 1987 (see figure 6).

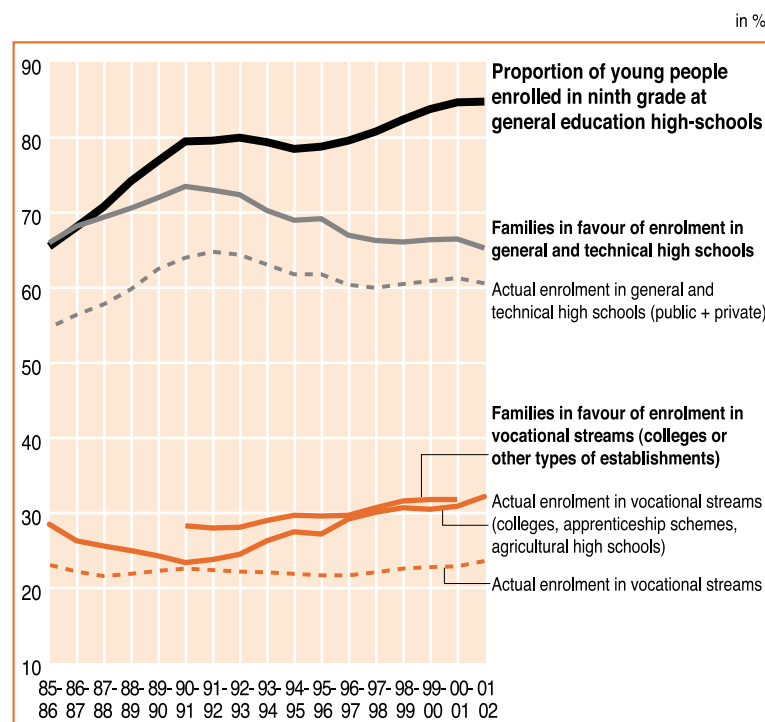
**After 1992,
the general
and technologic
high schools
attracts fewer scholars**

The enrolment in general and technologic high schools undergoes a particularly marked fall at the beginning of the 1993 and 1994 academic years. The rate of enrolment in tenth grade from the ninth grade in general education fell by 5 points between 1992 and 1997. This reversal of tendency is almost wholly accounted for by increases in enrolment in second-cycle vocational programs. It does not concern, though, the State vocational colleges (French “lycées professionnels”, see figure 7), as

an increasing number of students who complete the first cycle of secondary education now tend to opt for apprenticeships (French “centres de formation d’apprentis”) or study at agricultural high schools (French “lycées agricoles”). All in all, between 1994/5 and 1998/9, the rate of enrolment in general and technical high schools have dropped by 2 points for youngs aged of 16 to 17 and over 4 points for those of 18 to 20 years old, while the rate of enrolment in the vocational stream rose by 5 points at 16-year-old and 2 points at 17.

Over the last three academic years, the reversal of the previous trends has been somewhat mitigated. The resurgence in the popularity of general education high schools witnessed since 1999/2000 ran out of steam in 2001/2. The proportion of students entering general and technical tenth grade upon completing their first cycle of secondary education (regardless of the particular ninth grade stream they were enrolled in) has been fluctuating wildly: after falling to 57.1%, it rose slightly in 1999/2000 (+ 0.9 points), more markedly in 2000/1 (+1.4 points),

Figure 7 – Aspirations of the families of students having completed ninth grade and actual educational choices made



Scope : Mainland France.
The data should be read thus : 65.3 % of students having reached the end of the general ninth grade wished to continue their studies at general and technical high schools in the 2001/2 academic year ; 60.6 % actually enrolled in tenth grade at such establishments (both public and private) at the start of the 2001/2 academic year. For information, 84.7 % of the corresponding age groups were enrolled in general ninth grade in 2000/1 (versus 65.5 % in 1985/6).
Sources : French Ministry of Education, surveys of families' aspirations and of decisions made by educational guidance bodies (public schools), and surveys of the number of pupils enrolled in educational establishments (public and private, all Ministries).

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before falling back come the start of the 2001/2 academic year (- 0.8 points). Conversely, the proportion of students enrolled in CAP or BEP courses was in excess of 42% in 1998/9, whereupon it fell to 40% in 2000/1, before rising again lately (+ 0.6 points), particularly in vocational colleges.

The strong appeal of the vocational stream of education might be explained first of all by the increased promotion of apprenticeship, and most recently of vocational colleges, as well as by the current economic situation. A household's determination for 'investing in education' appears to be broadly correlated with its overall patterns of consumption: given difficult economic conditions, the parents of teenagers may not be too keen to underwrite their children's general education, which tends to be longer (eight years of secondary and further education for young people enrolled in second-cycle general or technical streams, compared to four, mostly in secondary school, for those embarking on a second cycle vocational course come the end of ninth grade).

The overall duration of schooling and the enrolment in higher education have fallen

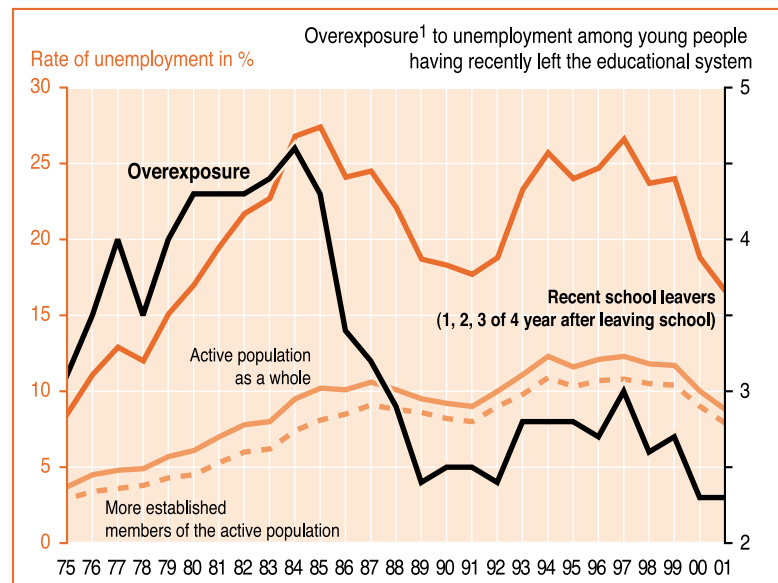
Are the recent changes in the educational choices made by scholars come the end of the first cycle of secondary education, favouring the vocational stream at the expense of the general education and technical streams, directly or wholly responsible for two major current phenomena, the trend for contraction of the average duration of schooling

and the drop in the rate of enrolment in third degree?

The long-lasting trend for extended of schooling has well and truly come to an end, this became clear first of all in secondary education. At this level, this cannot be blamed on changes in the choices made by students at the end of the ninth grade, for the duration of studies in the vocational stream (which is characterised by successive two-year periods spent preparing for the CAP/BEP, then the baccalaureate or vocational certificate) and in the general education and technical streams (three years in

theory) are very close. The contraction in the average duration of secondary studies is in fact due to a decrease of scholars repeating years. It is not that young people are leaving school early in greater numbers - this is negated by surveys of the levels they reach - simply, it is becoming rarer for them to repeat years and they are therefore getting through high-school faster. In 2000/1 there were 20,000 fewer school children repeating years in each of the two cycles than in 1996/7. Young people are also less likely to pursue their studies once they have obtained a vocational diploma, and this trend

Figure 8 - Comparative rates of unemployment among young people having recently left the educational system and their elders



1. Overexposure to unemployment among young people having recently left the educational system : this indicator measures the discrimination experienced by young people who recently left the educational system relative to their older peers. It represents the ratio between, in the numerator, the probability that those having recently left the educational system will be unemployed to the probability that more established members of the active population will not be unemployed, and in the denominator, the probability that more established members of the active population will be unemployed to the probability that those having recently left the educational system will not be unemployed (odd-ratio). In the absence of discrimination, the rate of overexposure to unemployment should be equal to 1.

The data should be read as follows : the rate of unemployment among young people having left the educational system less than 5 years previously amounted to 16.6 % in March 2001, compared with 7.9 % among more established members of the active population, and 8.8 % for the active population as a whole (left-hand-scale). This represented a rate of overexposure to unemployment of 2.3 among young people having recently left the educational system (right-hand scale).

Source : Insee - Employment surveys (1975-2001).

was particularly marked in 2000: the proportion of students having gained a CAP / BEP who then went on to obtain a baccalauréate or vocational certificate dropped by one point and the proportion of students leaving school prior to then eleventh grade in vocational schools rose by 1.5 points.

The changes of choices after the first cycle have had a real impact on then enrolment in further education.

Initially, the increased proportion of students obtaining a baccalauréate offset the effects of the demographic downturn (which was perceptible among baccalauréate students from 1992 onwards), as it had done previously in

second-cycle secondary education (see box 3). However, this compensatory effect came to an end after 1995. Enrolment figures for recent years reveal fewer baccalauréate holders than in previous years, both in proportional terms (less than a third of the relevant age groups in 2000 compared with a peak figure of 37% in 1995 – see figure 3) and absolute terms (– 6% between 1995 and 2000). This is in spite of the fact that 83% of general bachelors pursue their studies for at least ten years after then sixth grade, mostly in third degree, compared with 44% of technological bachelors and 12% of vocational bachelors. The rates of enrolment of recent generations in further education have thus fallen slightly (see box 3), although the global

duration of the studies remains stable, thanks to an ongoing rise in the rate of enrolment of older students (bachelors until 1995).

From 1998 onwards, due to the slight contraction in the length of schooling, the number of people leaving the education system actually rose

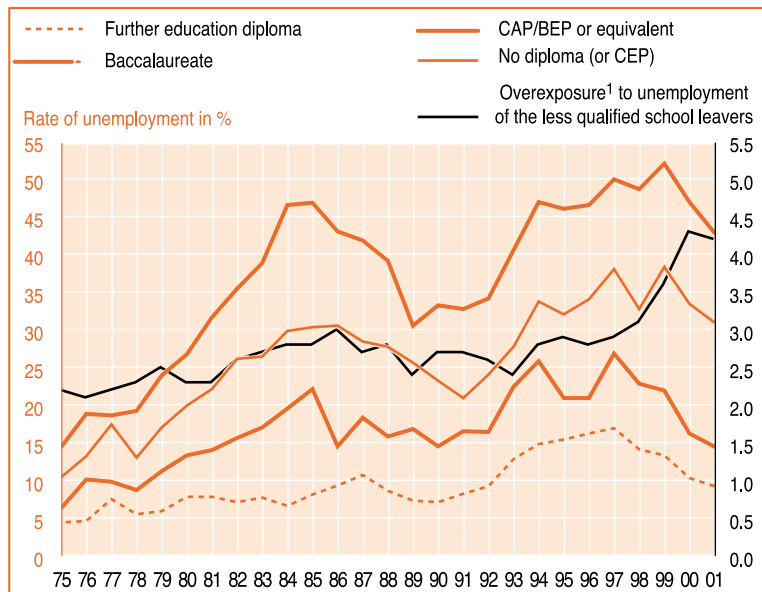
The number of young people leaving the education system fell between 1987 and 1992, due to the rapid expansion in the duration of schooling: these large generations effectively delayed their departure from the education system, each one of them completing their schooling at a more advanced age than the previous class of age.

Then the trend gradually stabilised – in the case of secondary schools, because of the fall in the number of people repeating years –, with the effect rippling along year by year into further education. Since 1997, and mainly since 1998, young people tend to study for slightly shorter periods than their predecessors. This contraction is hardly in keeping with the vast expansion that preceded it. However, the result is that the annual flow of people emerging from the education system is roughly equal to the number of young people in the age groups involved.

The situation of young people in the labour market has improved

Overall, young people having left the education system during the previous five years are in a

Figure 9 – The likelihood that young people leaving the educational system will be unemployed is inversely proportional to their degree of qualification



1. Overexposure to unemployment of the less qualified school leavers (i.e. young having only first cycle diploma or without any diploma) : refer to the explanatory note in figure 8.
 The data should be read thus : in March 2001, the rate of unemployment among young people having left the educational system less than five years previously with a higher education degree was 9 % versus 14 % among those holding a baccalauréate diploma, 19 % among CAP and BEP graduates and 43 % among those having left school without any diploma whatsoever.
 Source : Insee, Employment surveys (1975-2001).

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considerably better position relative to all adults taken together than they were in 1985. Their 'overexposure to unemployment' has nowadays been nearly halved. In 2001, a young person having left the education system at some point during the previous five years was 2.5 times more likely to be unemployed than other members of the active population, compared with 4.5 times more in 1985 (see figure 8).

Furthermore, the likelihood of finding a job now hinges more than ever before on the level of qualification or diplomas held by candidates, and the rate of overexposure to unemployment

among the less qualified school leavers has increased markedly since 1998 (see figure 9).

Over the past ten years, the greatest improvements in terms of access to employment for young people with diplomas took place in 2001. The abolition of national service (and of the dispensations to those who had jobs) doubtless contributed to this. Among young people having left the educational system since less than five years, 85% of third degree graduates were in employment in 2001, compared with 74% of those having obtained a second-cycle secondary education diploma, against 80%

and 67% ten years before. Conversely, only half the students who completed a CAP or BEP course or even baccalaureate studies without obtaining a diploma (French "V" and "IV") had managed to find a job (1 point up on 1991), and the figure for school leavers who left without achieving any qualifications (French "VI" and "Vb") was one in three.

Thus it may be said that unemployment, or conversely, the ease with which one can obtain a job, as well as its level and remuneration, now depend more than ever before on the level of people's qualifications and education. ■

For further information

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