

Quality convergence study

Comité national d'évaluation France

The structure of the study is broken down into 6 sections:

- HEIs organisation and evaluation bodies and Inspectorate;
- Quality assurance organisation
- HEIs autonomy;
- Programmes.
- Teaching staff;
- Students.

All sections but the third ones include 5 subsections:

- facts;
- main outlines and goals;
- current situations and on-going changes ;
- impacts and subsequent questioning;
- considering quality.

I - Higher education system

1. The Higher education institutions

The French higher education system is a broadly public funded system developed according to the notion of public service of higher education. This notion notably means that:

- Most of the HEIs have been established by the State;
- The costs of the study are largely covered by a direct funding of the institutions (the students fees are low);
- Every student having passed the baccalaureate (that achieves secondary education, and is actually the first University qualification) should find a possibility to enter the higher education system.

Looking at the characteristics which underpin the development of the higher education system, the more notable are the low cost of studies for the student, the spread of the HEIs (especially the universities) over the national territory and the coexistence of several kind of subsystems as regard the types of institutions. In particular a distinction must be made between the general higher education, which by definition is connected with research through the teaching staff (enseignants-chercheurs) and a direct participation to research at the master level (universities and engineering courses) and further, and the professional higher education, which is not directly performed in connexion with research.

In brief, the main elements, which characterize the French HEIs, are the funding, the access conditions and the research capacities.

	Universities	Engineering courses	Others types of HEI
Selection at the entry	Only for health, engineering courses and specific diplomas	Yes	Yes
Research	Yes (by definition)	In link with universities or national research bodies	Not necessarily
Public funding	Yes (by definition)	Part of them	Only a few

Tendencies of the development of the HEIs number

As a consequence of the growing number of student since the mid 80s, the number of institutions has increased. This growth is not the same for the different kind of institutions and reflects the differential growth of the disciplinary fields. One notes:

- An increase of the number of university institutions during the 90s (creation of new universities, outposts of universities, IUT, engineering schools in universities);
- The creation of University Centres for Education and Research by merger of several university outposts;
- The creation of polytechnical university engineering schools by merger of several engineering courses;
- The stabilisation of the number of engineering schools outside universities;
- The increase of the number of high schools with Advanced Technical Sections (STS) (short higher education course within the general and technological Lycées which dispense training over 2 years, leading to a higher technician certificate);
- A tendency toward a diminution of the number of business schools.

HEIs and organizations involved in higher education en 2002-2003

Universities or similar	93
- IUT (University Institute of Technology) (1)	112
IUFM (University school for primary and high school teachers)	30
STS (Advanced Technical Section) (2)	2100
- including public	1293
- including private	807
CPGE (Preparatory classes for the Grandes écoles) (2)	485
- including public	338
- including private	147
Engineering schools	243
- including public, in universities	93
- including public, outside universities	82
- including private	68
Business, management and accountancy schools	225
Private university institutions	15
Écoles normales supérieures (schools preparing teachers for higher education)	4
Schools of architecture	23
Écoles supérieures artistiques et culturelles (artistic and cultural purposes)	243
Paramedical schools outside universities (3)	427
Schools preparing to social careers	141
Other schools of diverse specialities	225
- including law and administrative schools	65
- including schools of journalism and literary schools	24
- including veterinary schools	4

Source : RERS, Ministère de l'Éducation nationale

(1) The IUTs are parts of universities.

(2) High schools with STS (Advanced Technical Sections) or CPGE (Preparatory classes for the Grandes écoles).

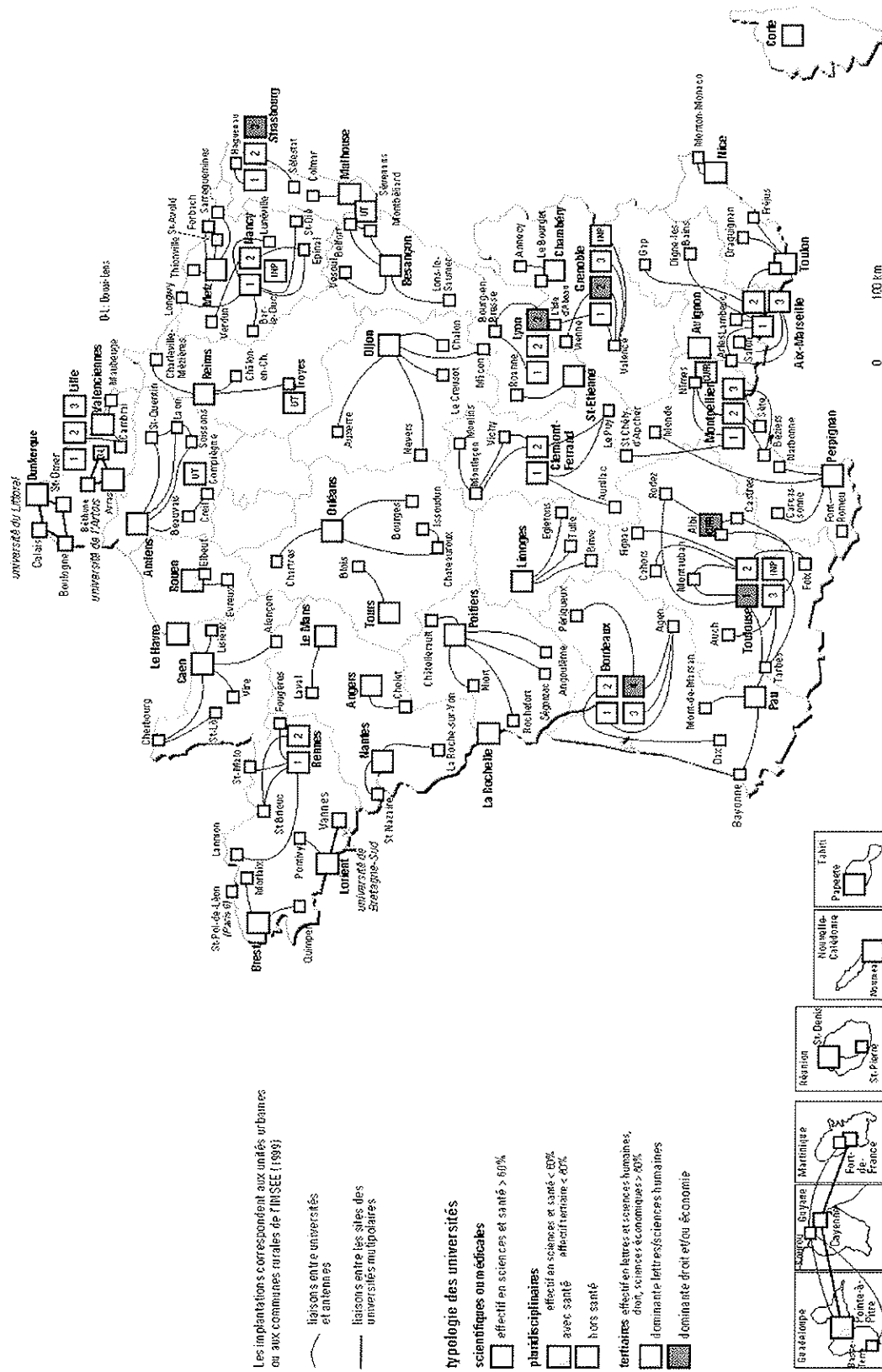
Several points need to be pointed out to clarify the HEIs outlook and setting apart the concept of university in France:

- A large number of students is likely to enrol the Instituts Universitaires de Technologie (IUT), that award a job-related certificate after specialized short-term studies. These institutions embark about 115,000 students. There are a part of the universities.
- Universities encompass schools for primary, secondary and high-school teachers that provide training for applicant and students who passed the entrance examination. These schools (Institut Universitaire de Formation des Maîtres) are financially autonomous but contractually linked to the universities.
- High-schools provide also short-term studies leading to a higher technical certificate. These schools do not belong to the university but relate to the secondary level.
- Most of the education in engineering and in business is delivered by higher education schools, often called by tradition "Grandes écoles". These schools in some case may have relation rules by convention with universities. To enrol the "Grandes écoles", the students must take a highly selective exam. This exam is prepared for one or two years in high schools (in preparatory classes for the "Grandes écoles" and also in some universities). A significant number of preparatory classes are included in the "Grandes écoles".

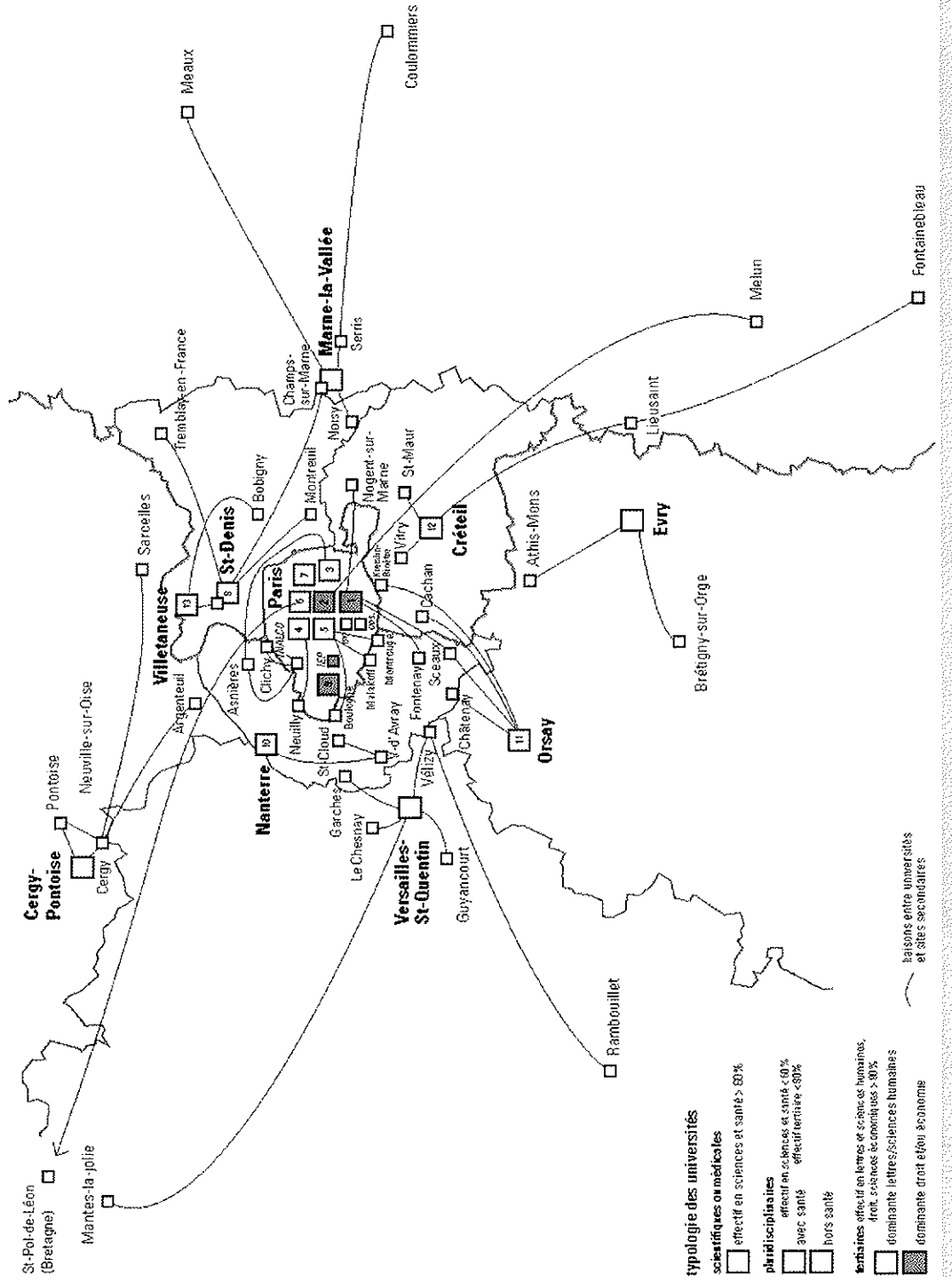
The map of the higher education system

In order to help the potential students to enrol in higher education, the French policy has lead to the development of a huge density of higher education infrastructures. To a certain extend this policy, which is successful as regard the number of students, has had a side effect generating a low mobility of students, in particular for the first cycle of studies and put into question the smaller higher education outposts that can't propose a real higher education environment (well developed libraries, cultural facilities, diversified sets of programmes and disciplines, research facilities, ...)

Universities and similar and their secondary sites apart from Ile-de-France in 2002-2003



Universities and similar and their secondary sites in Ile-de-France in 2002-2003

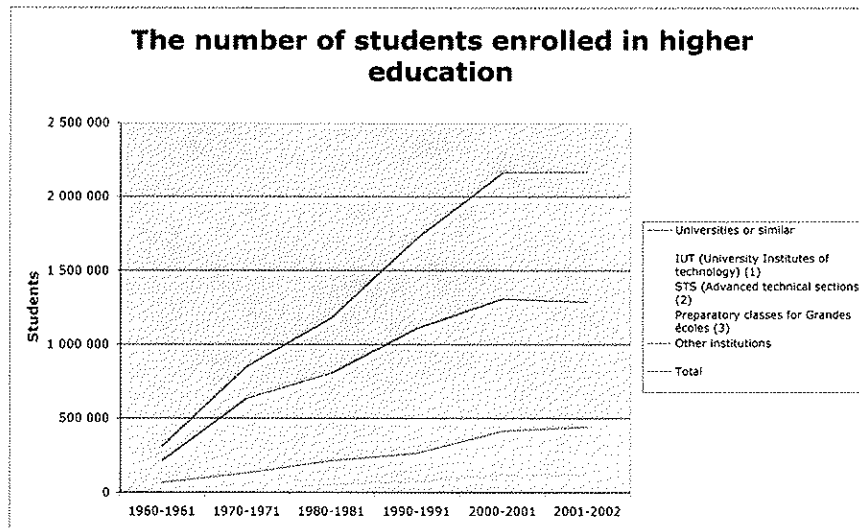


> atlas régional > 2002-2003

2. The number of students

The universities have taken the biggest part of the growing number of students.

	1960-1961	1970-1971	1980-1981	1990-1991	1998-1999	1999-2000	2000-2001	2001-2002	2002-2003
Universities or similar	214 700	637 000	804 400	1 108 500	1 309 800	1 302 200	1 307 700	1 286 000	1 309 900
IUT (University Institutes of technology) (1)		24 200	53 700	74 300	114 600	117 400	119 200	118 100	115 100
STS (Advanced technical sections) (2)	8 000	26 800	67 900	204 900	246 600	248 800	248 800	246 900	245 100
Preparatory classes for Grandes écoles (3)	21 000	32 600	40 100	64 400	71 400	70 900	70 300	70 700	72 000
Other institutions	66 000	130 000	215 000	264 900	384 500	397 200	415 000	443 200	467 200
Total	309 700	850 600	1 181 100	1 717 000	2 126 900	2 136 500	2 161 000	2 164 900	2 209 300



Evolution of the number of students enrolled in higher education (Metropolitan France + French overseas administrative departments)

Higher education	1990-1991	2000-2001	2002-2003
Universities or similar	1 182 784	1 426 939	1 424 933
- including general disciplines and health	1 108 456	1 307 693	1 309 871
- including university engineering schools	17 325	33 599	38 690
	74 328	119 246	115 062
IUFM (University schools for primary and high school teachers)		80 184	89 062
STS (Advanced Technical sections)	204 920	248 849	245 070
- Public (ministry of national education)	112 213	157 662	156 785
- Public (other ministries)	9 343	14 443	13 556
- Private	83 364	76 744	74 729
CPGE (Preparatory classes for engineering courses)	64 427	70 263	72 015
- Public (ministry of national education)	52 572	57 948	59 431
- Public (other ministries)	1 419	1 678	1 694
- Private	10 436	10 637	10 890
Preparatory classes for engineering courses in engineering schools	3 965	3 571	3 323
Non university engineering courses (1)	40 328	61 609	63 717
- Public (ministry of national education)	15 461	23 208	22 427
- Public (other ministries)	10 865	14 866	16 155
- Private	14 002	23 535	25 135
Business, management and accountancy schools	46 128	63 905	74 680
Private higher education institutions	19 971	21 739	19 751
Écoles normales d'instituteurs (schools preparing teachers for primary education)	16 500		
Écoles normales supérieures (Schools preparing teachers for higher education)	2 675	3 159	3 044
Law and administrative schools	7 328	9 786	11 107
Écoles supérieures artistiques et culturelles (Artistic and cultural purposes) (2)	41 988	52 082	60 366
Paramedical schools and schools preparing to social careers (3)	74 435	93 386	111 888
Other schools (4)	11 611	25 592	30 215
Total metropolitan France + French overseas administrative departments	1 717 060	2 161 064	2 209 171

Public University Higher Education	1990-1991	2000-2001	2002-2003
Universités et assimilés	1 182 784	1 426 939	1 424 933
- dont disciplines générales et de santé	1 108 456	1 307 693	1 309 871
- dont formations d'ingénieurs universitaires	17 325	33 599	38 690
- dont IUT	74 328	119 246	115 062
Ecoles normales d'instituteurs (schools preparing teachers for primary education)	16 500		
IUFM (University schools for primary and high school teachers)		80 184	89 062
Ecoles normales supérieures (Schools preparing teachers for higher education)	2 675	3 159	3 044
Total metropolitan France + French overseas administrative departments	1 201 959	1 510 282	1 517 039

Public Non University Higher Education	1990-1991	2000-2001	2002-2003
CPGE (Preparatory classes for engineering courses)	53 991	59 626	61 125
STS (Advanced Technical sections)	121 556	172 105	170 341
- Public Éducation nationale	112 213	157 662	156 785
- Publics autres ministères	9 343	14 443	13 556
Preparatory classes for engineering courses in engineering schools	3 965	3 571	3 323
Non university engineering courses (1)	26 326	38 074	38 582
- Public Éducation nationale	15 461	23 208	22 427
- Publics autres ministères	10 865	14 866	16 155
Total metropolitan France + French overseas administrative departments	205 838	273 376	273 371

Private or, in some cases, public Non University Higher Education	1990-1991	2000-2001	2002-2003
CPGE privées (Private preparatory classes for engineering courses)	10 436	10 637	10 890
STS privées (Private Advanced Technical sections)	83 364	76 744	74 729
Law and administrative schools	7 328	9 786	11 107
Ecoles supérieures artistiques et culturelles (Artistic and cultural purposes) (2)	41 988	52 082	60 366
Paramedical schools and schools preparing to social careers (3)	74 435	93 386	111 888
Other schools (4)	11 611	25 592	30 215
Total metropolitan France + French overseas administrative departments	229 162	268 227	299 195

Private, professional, or depending of local authorities Non University Higher Education	1990-1991	2000-2001	2002-2003
Private non university engineering courses (1)	14 002	23 535	25 135
Business, management and accountancy schools	46 128	63 905	74 680
Private higher education institutions	19 971	21 739	19 751
Total metropolitan France + French overseas administrative departments	80 101	109 179	119 566

Source : RERS, Ministère de l'Éducation nationale

- (1) Including engineering courses in partnership.
- (2) Including Schools of architecture, of journalism and of communication.
- (3) Estimated figures in 2001-2002, and for a part of the schools in 2002-2003.
- (4) Non homogeneous group Veterinary schools, EHESS, others schools depending of other ministries

	1990-1991	2000-2001	2002-2003
Public University Higher Education	1 201 959	1 510 282	1 517 039
Public Non University Higher Education	205 838	273 376	273 371
Private or, in some cases, public Non University Higher Education	229 162	268 227	299 195
Private, professional, or depending of local authorities Non University Higher Education	80 101	109 179	119 566
	1 717 060	2 161 064	2 209 171

	1990-1991	2000-2001	2002-2003
Public University Higher Education	70,0%	69,9%	68,7%
Public Non University Higher Education	12,0%	12,7%	12,4%
Private or, in some cases, public Non University Higher Education	13,3%	12,4%	13,5%
Private, professional, or depending of local authorities Non University Higher Education	4,7%	5,1%	5,4%
	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

3. Evaluation and control bodies

The French higher education system is largely State controlled in keeping with a long tradition of centralisation. The bodies in charge of the evaluation or of the control task are numerous and most of the time national and specialised. The density and in some case the almost overlapping of structure must be enlighten as a specific point in the context of this project. An overall presentation of the French system of evaluation and control in higher education is presented in the second part "Quality assurance organisation in France".

II - Quality assurance organisation in France

This part sets out an overall view of the national quality assurance system in France for HEIs. As the French quality assurance system encompasses a high range of bodies and devices connected to quality assurance in France, CNE decided to outline the main stakes and to present a short outlook of quality assurance institutions.

1. Facts

Numerous bodies, that are all public-funded, tackle with quality assurance in HEIs. These bodies are not coordinated at a governmental level. Although generally clearly defined, their missions happen to overlap.

At governmental level, sections of the Ministry of Education operate: general inspectorate, ad hoc commissions for specific trainings. Some national institutions assess quality for HEIs but as part of their regular missions (Cour des Comptes). Besides, some departments of the Ministry of Education are assigned to review and evaluate HEI policies (somehow e.g. Department for Evaluation and Prospective) and other non-Ministry-linked national bodies undertake evaluations as well in the framework of national policies evaluations (e.g.; Planning Authority).

With a view to providing a complete and easy-to-read scope of the HEIs quality assurance system in France, a matrix on the outlook of these various bodies is enclosed to this document. The text below clarifies the missions and objectives of the 3 main evaluation bodies, connected to 3 domains : institutional evaluations, teaching offering and teaching staff, .

Institutional evaluation

The Comité National d'Evaluation (CNE) :

Autonomy of HEIs was stated by law in 1968 and reinforced in 1984. The legal counterpart of autonomy of HEIs was the setting up of the CNE. As the HEIs gained autonomy, the government encouraged them to benefit from institutional evaluation, that is a global evaluation of the institutions themselves. CNE was assigned to assess the ability of HEIs to takeover their autonomy.

Then, CNE was turned into a independent administrative authority with a legal status that protects the authority from governmental and political influence. The board of CNE is made up of 25 members, appointed by the President of the Republic for 4 years not immediately renewable. The President picks out members from lists of applicants proposed by national institutions made up of peers (CNU, CNRS, Institut de France, Collège de France, association of Rectors). The members come primarily from these lists. Moreover, other constitutional institutions (Council of State, Cour des Comptes) and economic-related unions (trade unions and employers associations) propose lists of applicants. Several of them are members. Three members from European universities have been appointed in 2003 (Italy, Spain, Belgium).

CNE carries out institutional evaluations at a global level: every mission enrolled by HEIs are assessed. CNE evaluates the capacity of HEIs to draw up, prepare, implement a policy and to assess the outcomes of this policy. CNE focuses mainly on the functioning and management of HEIs, training offering, research integrated policy, student accommodations, vocational integration at various geographical scales (one HEI only, all HEIs in one city or in a broader area).

Evaluation methods used by CNE are released via internet and quarterly news bulletins. Every report endorsed by CNE is released on the internet. The evaluation methods are now being stabilized. They consist of 2 main stages: an internal evaluation run by the institution itself; an external evaluation accomplished by peers on specific themes. CNE has customized its methods to help the HEIs in the demonstration of defining themselves in a universal and relevant manner. CNE methods suggest the institution explain and clarify its policies and strategies according to a system of references that reflects the expectations of the society. The HEIs are also asked to highlight evidences of the implementation and evaluation of their policies. This new approach launched by CNE is likely to reinforce the design and implementation of quality assurance internal systems in HEIs. For more information, please visit: <http://www.cne-evaluation.fr>

The Commission des Titres d'Ingénieurs (CTI)

Legally based in 1934, confirmed by the 1984 law, the CTI is the accreditation committee in charge of:

- Going through any issue related to engineer course, whatever the domain is.
- Looking into accreditation appliances leading to awarding engineer credentials (titles and degrees);
- Possibly projecting the quality of engineer diplomas and performing evaluations and reviews in any engineer course and on the behalf of the professional corporation.

The CTI is entitled to accreditate engineer courses (including private-funded schools). The CTI is requested by the Ministry of Education on advisory capacity concerning public-funded training offering

The 32-member-board is made up of 16 members appointed by the Ministry and 16 others coming from professional sector.

CTI methods are released and combine internal and external assessment. It provides a system of references and orientations that is the overarching frame of an internal analysis of the course processing. The examination file covers internal and external evaluations plus a description of the institution, and in-depth presentation of the training offering (including quality assurance process, student accommodations, vocational integration). The CTI board appraises in plenary setting after presentation by a spokesman.

CTI appraisal is carried out every 6 years. However, some accreditations may be awarded for a shorter period or falling under pre-requisites to be filled in.

The trends of internationalisation of careers and training courses have prompted the CTI to refine the general framework of references and orientations that define evolutions to be integrated by engineer course. The overall presentation of CTI methods and accreditation tools and criteria are now available on <http://www.commission-cti.fr>.

Training offering evaluation

The mission scientifique, technique et pédagogique (MSTP)

The training offering delivered by public-funded HEIS is evaluated by the MSTP, except for engineers training assessed by the CTI (see above). The MSTP is an expert body falling under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education, Research and Technology. The MSTP is basically dedicated to the department of the Ministry in charge of HE. The MSTP delivers technical advices with a view to assessing the habilitation (French word for accreditation) of the training offering (decided in the last instance by the Ministry) and the acceptance of HEIs researchers teams.

Ten specialized sections range every discipline and overlaps of disciplines. About one hundred of scientists are currently working for MSTP (members). About 1 300 experts are embarked on the MSTP assessments.

The MSTP undertakes the assessment of programmes, previously and retrospectively to the 4-year-contract signed between the Government and the HEIs but dealing only with "training offering" and "research" parts of the contract.

The members and experts of MSTP are cooptated but neither the cooptation rules nor the outcomes of the expertises driven by MSTP are released. The HEIs are the only recipients of the reports.

Teaching staff evaluation

The Conseil National des Universités (CNU)

Most teachers in HEIs are assigned to a triple mission: teaching, carrying out research projects and taking on institutional responsibilities within the HEI system.

Becoming a member of the teaching staff in a University is the result of a twofold procedure: a national selection allows a candidate to apply for a position offered by a HEI (for qualification); and a local selection (for recruitment). The specific local procedure is however nationally framed: it involves first a proposal of a "Commission de spécialiste" (peers issued from the department, other departments of the same university and from other universities), and an endorsement of this proposal by the governing Council before transmission to the Minister of Education. The national part of the procedure is under the responsibility of the CNU.

This council CNU is in charge of assessing the academic quality of teacher-researchers on the 3 above-mentioned domains regarding 2 options: qualification and advancement.

In France, qualification is a formal procedure for the Ministry to state the future teacher-researcher is able to apply for a position in the HEI system. The applicant holds a PhD (obligatory to be « Master ») and an habilitation to conduct research projects (optional, but obligatory to obtain credentials to get the position of « Professor of the Universities »). Applicants are selected on the basis of their application files setting out their activities in their research fields, publications, practice of institutional responsibilities, etc.

Qualification is delivered for a 4-year-period. The applicant must find a position in the different HEIs within this timeframe, otherwise he or she must apply again.

Advancement concerns the change of steps within the formal grade scale shaped on national regulations. The regulations define conditions and proportions to be promoted (depending of each branches (« Master » or « Professor »). The CNU attributes promotions for one part, the HEIs for another part (HEIs set up commission of specialists made up of experts of the disciplines).

The CNU is structure in 56 disciplinary sections. Members of each sections are elected by peers of the discipline (for 2/3 of them ; 1/3 area appointed directly by the Ministry of Education on the proposal of scientific counsellors). In 2003, all the 56 sections addressed 3 420 files applying for Professor qualification and 14 775 for « Master » qualification.

Evaluation methods and criteria used for promotion and advancement are not explicit and publicly codified. The ways to qualify or to attribute promotion differ from one section to another and depend sometimes on the peers themselves in the boundaries of a section. Several sections disseminate their methods and criteria, using networking among experts of the same disciplines (e.g. research laboratories) or unions. Moreover, the sections and their presidents are free to publish or not their regulations.

2. Main outlines and goals

Assessing quality in HEIs is shared among multiple bodies. Evaluations are driven by peers, partly helped by experts who belong to other fields (e.g. economic world).

The different evaluation bodies reflect the variety of status, experts independence, procedures release and dissemination of evaluation outcomes.

The latter description highlights about the combination of national and local procedures (i.e. at the HEIs level) that means an evidence to protect the public service good, which is a consensual principle in France. 2 examples outline the mix up of levels of evaluation:

- HEIs contract with the Government on national common guidelines and obligations. But each HEI has full liberty to roll out specific objectives on the basis of a global project drawn up independently. CNE doesn't carry out institutional evaluation upon the contracts per se. Contracts are assessed individually by the Ministry departments in charge of partnership and with the advisory support of the MSTP for the academic and research parts. CNE evaluates the capacity of the HEIs to use their autonomy to improve the relevance and efficiency of their missions. CNE encourages HEIs to reinforce their freedom for autonomy while endorsing the service public obligations (e.g. territorial coverage, keeps rare courses available....)
- The recruitment system of teachers-researchers is functioning also with a 2-level stage combining national and local implications. They get the qualifications by the Ministry but are picked out by the HEIs on a list. Finally, the Ministry appoints the « Master » or Professor (whose both position falls under the umbrella of the national public civil servant bodies).

III - HEIs autonomy

1. Facts

Legal framework overview

The Ministry of Higher Education is responsible only for all education in public establishments and establishments of scientific, cultural and vocational education such as universities, schools and institutes outside universities, IUFM, French schools abroad and large establishments. These establishments have since 1968 had autonomy as regards teaching, academic content, administration and finance. The law of January 26 1984 on higher education lays down the legal framework for State higher education organisation.

This law re-iterates the basic principles of the 1968 law: participation, pluridisciplinarity, vocational study into higher education and autonomy,

The State used to define curricula but recently switched to another system: universities are now responsible for designing the pedagogical frames plus defining their curricula; The Ministry of Education appraises the relevance of the training domains and the possibility for the students to attend a coherent study scheme in the universities (see above: Training offering evaluation by the *mission scientifique, technique et pédagogique (MSTP)*). The Ministry is not involved in the consistency of the curricula anymore. The Ministry of Education continues to have essential responsibilities: it recognises national diplomas, allocates teaching and research posts, evaluates research programmes with growing recourse to foreign expertise, more particularly European, and finally, co-ordinates university education. But new relations with teaching establishments have been introduced since 1989. *The former annual allocation of means and teaching authorisations by the central administration has been replaced by a policy characterised by the conclusion of four-year contracts between the State and HEIs.* The aim of this contractual policy is both to give genuine new autonomy to universities and to allow the State to exercise fully its responsibility to boost and co-ordinate activity in higher education. Each establishment draws up a development plan corresponding both to national objectives and to local training and research needs. This plan, which covers all the activities in the establishment, is addressed to the appropriate department of the Ministry, and then negotiated with it. Finally, a four-year contract is signed and produces three major results:

- the contract is a factor in the overall development policy, common to all the players in the institution,
- the contract provides a unique opportunity for dialogue between the State and institutions,
- the contract is a management tool enabling projected means to be allocated (particularly operating funds). The global sum allocated by the State to each institution allows the policy to be adapted to changing needs over four years¹.

A likely modernisation bill

Every stakeholder is in favour of even more autonomy in the HEI system that could cover: pedagogical organization, administrative and financial issues. The French Conference of Presidents of Universities launched a large debate on the needy increasing of autonomy for HEIs. Workshops were held to look into possibilities to obtain a global budget and patrimonial transfer to the institutions. In 2001, the Ministry favoured a new HE bill so-called "HEIs modernisation bill".

However, practicing autonomy raise several impediments:

- it is hard task to draw the line somewhere between HEIs pedagogical autonomy and the existence of national orientations and the guarantee for a national-based accreditation. Autonomy is actually intended to develop within the framework of HE public service framework. The will for autonomy is constrained by the public service notion of equity, which is broadly shared by HEIs stakeholders (students, teachers, politicians).
- Besides, dual HE system (see HEIs outlook) brings about difficulties of harmonization among so many type of establishments;

¹ (this part is freely based on Eurydice HEI system description. For detail please see Eurydice database "Structure of Education in Europe, France, www.eurydice.org).

- The project of the HEIs that turns into a contract with the Government has helped HEIs to become more autonomous. But there are several types of practicing autonomy which raise new drawbacks and weaken to the capacities of development:
 - Academic independence by teachers-researchers involved in the recruitment process at national level mismatches with the freedom of recruitment by HEIs;
 - Autonomy of components of institutions, based on governing bodies, including an elected director and an self-budget;
 - Legal-based autonomy of some institutes that are housed by the HEIs;
 - Broad consensus culture within the university community.

Moreover, the Ministry in charge of HE is unlikely to regulate on a national scale the overall system. There is no training offering map, management standards are not clearly stabilized, the culture of accountability among HEIs remains weak, evaluations recommendations do not result in subsequent operational impacts for HEIs.

2. Main outlines and goals

The aforementioned contradictions bring about the chief outlines and goals.

The shift from a direct State-ruled system to a decentralized partnership policy with HEIs triggers the capacity of implementing and practicing autonomy. However, questions need to be pointed out:

- Confusing relation between HEIs' project and contract has risen as years go by; the significance of the compulsory contract review has been steadily left out.
- Accuracy of the length of project and contract. Shall the project last more than 4 years?
- Opportunities to better associate components of the university to draw up the project, in order to enhance a cooperative participation for the coming years?
- Contract is a way to get a budgetary bonus (10%). Should it be financed by a global-sized budget or should it be supported by other financial levers?

Besides, the possibility to toughen the running and monitoring system of HEIs does not yet comply with multiple areas of competences that fall under the same institution. HEIs' governing bodies have to put up with several strategies designed by the different components (trainings courses, autonomous institutes, etc). On a larger scale, the lack of training offering map impedes the HEIs from supporting a wise competition among institutions.

As a temporary conclusion, the central question is the optimal role of the State in a context of willingness to enhance autonomy.

3. Current situation and on-going changes

Partnership policy has succeeded in the ten past years, a recent report by the National Planning Committee has just stated. This policy positively affected the relationship between HEIs and the Government and enabled them to practice autonomy. This policy could be lightly improved but without any substantial changes.

One the other hand, the new national budget bill will imply public services to switch from budgetary considerations to reasoning based on outcomes. This bill is likely to boost the possibilities of the HEIs to pursue their practice of autonomy.

4. Impacts and subsequent questioning

The question of global budget is underlined by the question of the real capacities of HEIs to embark financial and patrimonial management, to operate human resources policies (including wages processing) and to bear new constraints. The current regulations do not allow the President (who is the official person with power to authorize expenditure) to manage every fund of the institution in a comprehensive way. Besides, presidents may lack accurate financial skills among their supporting staff (high-skilled accountants are not attracted by a career plan in HEIs). Finally, the break down of funds is unwisely shared among the different components of the institutions and varies regarding the study cycles.

HEIs are not literally in full capacity of managing properties (maintenance, safety measures in buildings...). the involvement of local authorities for the past 15 years result in the building of new sites rather than properties restoration.

5. Considering quality

Considering quality means for HEIs to phase in new internal quality assurance procedures and more effective self-evaluation practices (as the forthcoming budget law will require soon).

Enhancing and putting autonomy into action relies on the ability of the HEIs to draw such together:

- Capacity to collate relevant information to draw up reliable diagnosis, to know itself (via self-evaluation), to be acquainted to its environment, to insert national orientations into reflection.
- Capacity to make choices, to grade one's projects, to arbitrate and make arrangements on one's own, to work out what is possible and what is feasible.
- Capacity to turn decisions into operational actions including intermediate levels of decisions and the necessary process of accountability.
- Capacity to evaluate and to draw adequate conclusions from evaluations, by linking attended outcomes with obtained outcomes.

Summary:

- More autonomous HEIs is required by all the stakeholders, considering HEIs are now embarking national and international competition.
- Debate on autonomy integrates too many institutional and political stakes to be peaceful as needed.

Internal quality assurance procedures should be included as a major issue in the next contractual arrangements as one way to raise the HEIs capacity to assume their autonomy.

IV - Programmes

The HE system in France features a high variety of teaching courses and multiple institutions able to issue HE diplomas.

1. Facts

Complexity of the system

HE courses are provided by universities and by general and technological high schools (which don't fall under the umbrella of universities but belong to the secondary level) for vocational/technological courses.

Basics and practical courses are chiefly given in universities. Vocational teaching is shared among universities (in professional branch devoted to job-market orientation), high schools and public or private specialized colleges.

No selection admission is required to start French universities providing applicants hold a Baccalaureate. Nevertheless, admission requirements exist for a large number of HEIs except universities (competitive examination or assessment on dossiers or on past studies, work experience to be the award of a formal qualification, personal skills validation).

Main courses provide national diplomas but a part leads to specific university certificates (previously Government-agreed).

2. The main outlines and stakes in the debates

Complexity of the HE system

Setting the complexity of the system apart, diplomas are identified through the number of years of study to be graduated since Baccalaureate. The training offering ranges thus from Baccalaureate + 2 years of study (to obtain a DEUG² at the university, a DUT or a BTS³) to Baccalaureate + 5 years of study (to obtain a grade for research DEA⁴, a grade for professional orientation DESS⁵ or to have an engineer degree). Students may prefer to stop at Baccalaureate + 3 (they get in this case a Bachelor degree) or to keep on studying at the university after DEA to have a Ph D.

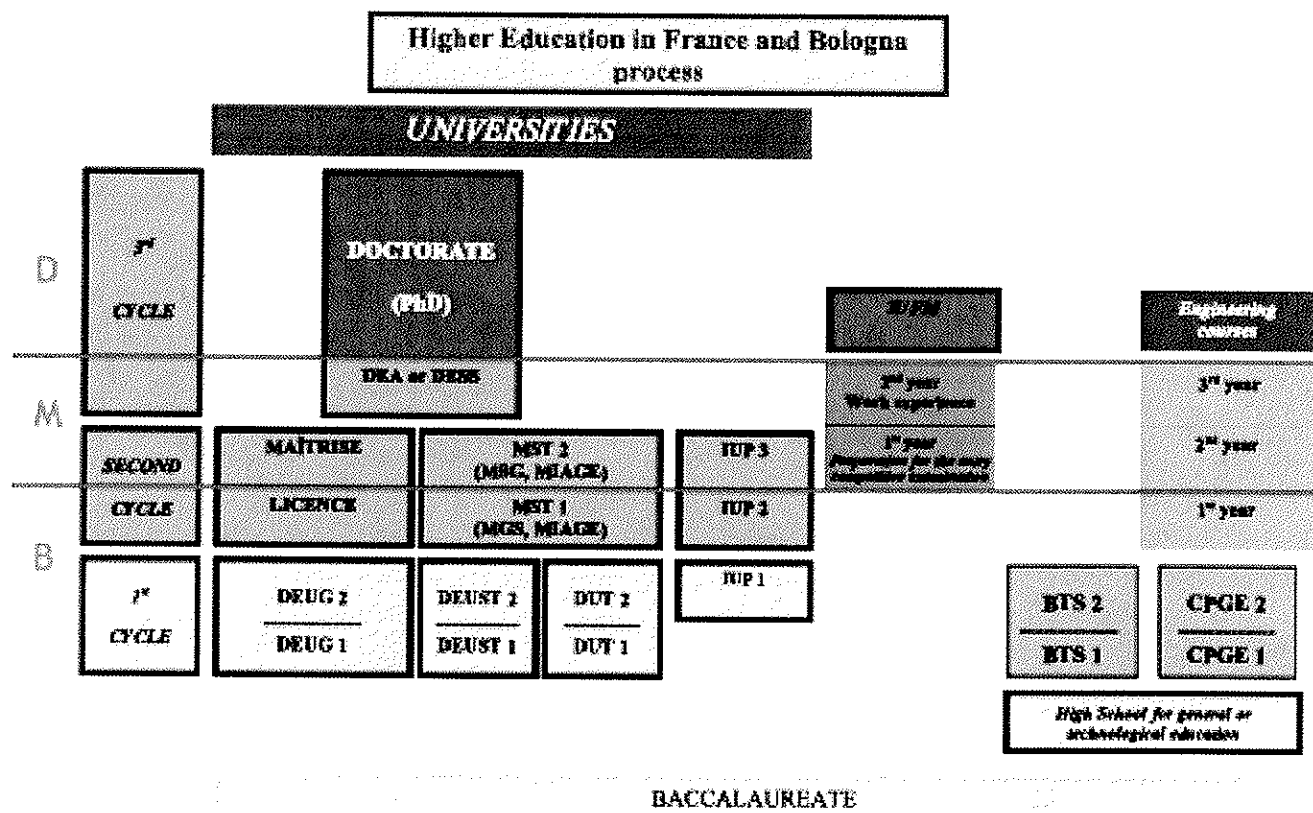
The BMD scheme clarifies the spectrum of diplomas to put underline 3 main levels: bachelor, master and doctorate. The current regulations maintain all of the intermediate levels however.

² DEUG: Diplôme d'Etudes Universitaires Générales, leads to a certificate of general universities studies. Some lead to scientific and technical university certificates allowing entry into the job-market.

³ DUT: Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie, leads to a certificate which entitles the holder to take on a managerial position in secondary and tertiary level. BTS: Brevet de Technicien Supérieur leads to a higher technical certificate.

⁴ DEA: Diplôme d'Etudes Approfondies leads after a first-year to an advanced certificate and then to the preparation over three or four years of a doctorate.

⁵ DESS: Diplôme d'Etudes Supérieures Spécialisées leads to a certificate of advanced specialized studies (professional education + compulsory of in-company training).



Training offering habilitation (national diplomas) compliance with the guarantee for quality.

National diplomas are provided by HEIs under the condition to be obtain previously a ministerial habilitation delivered by the Ministry of Education on advice of an experts committee of the MSTP⁶ (see above). Some prerequisites are expected to get the habilitation:

- compliance of the training offering with the in-house scientific skills of the HEI teachers bodies, especially for the Master and doctorate degree. Research activities and scientific outputs by teachers are actually part of evaluation criteria of the MSTP ;
- External expertise connected to its professional domains ;
- Relevance of the training schemes, sound structuring of teaching units, wise defined academic, validation modalities of teaching offering and student learning outcomes.

Evaluation criteria are released by MSTP and the assessment of the proposed degrees is done by an experts committee made of academics. The MSTP performs on advisory capacity only, the Ministry keeps the decision to deliver the *habilitation* or not.

Elitism vs. democratisation within HE system

The image of the French HEI system may be considered as fragmented and compartmentalized as a results from recent history. The system was built up under a core of consensual considerations:

- To preserve the raise of elite, selected on academic meritocratic basis, ensured by the schools of excellence and engineer institutions ;
- To keep up with the democratisation of HEI system relying on non-selective entry to the university for every young with a Baccalaureate degree for general courses and on the establishment of selective professional-oriented courses (responding to the qualitative and quantitative demand from the job-market)

Vocational focus on studies

The HEIs have recently had to face up a massive entry of new students and to respond to qualification needs expressed by the professional branches regarding the job-market trends. The vocational focus on studies basically results in increasing pressure on HEIs and ended up in even more complexity.

⁶ MSTP: Mission Scientifique Technique et Pédagogique.

The complexity also reflects the difficulty to change the current organization schemes and student accommodations. This lead to the preference for diversification and setting up new diplomas to the detriment of the overall lacks clarity of the system –particularly for an external observer.

To ensure the matching between training and employment as far, professional unions representatives have been associated to the national evaluation procedures, especially within follow-up committees or advisory commissions set up for each kind of diplomas.

3. The current situations and ongoing changes

The implementation of the BMD reform

While enhancing the range and quality of current courses schemes, the implementation of the BMD reform is the opportunity to:

- enhance the clarification of HE teaching offering ;
- reinforce the quality of training schemes and means to demonstrate it with a view to ensuring the value of diplomas and guaranteeing conditions for mutual recognition among various national HEI systems ;
- increase possibilities for students to redirect their degree courses, increase mobility in France and worldwide, enrol new kinds of students thanks to personal and training skills recognition, including e-learning experience.

The debate on the future of the educational system

Training recognition and working experience recognition deeply modify the current practices of HEIs. It will become hard for HEIs to protect an image of quality and to be judged valuable at a national scale and abroad whether they award diplomas without offering the corresponding teaching, and without any means to appraise the teaching quality of other institutions.

4. The impact and the subsequent questioning

Threats to the setting up of accreditation-mills

Academic quality recognition shaped on professional integration of the diplomas criteria and the temptation to oppose short-term utility and knowledge is considered as one of the most significant stake of the on-going reform. From the students point of view, accreditation carried out by employers or any private quality assurance company may prevail over the traditional habilitation operated by national bodies.

Threats to the fade of the public service principle of the HE system.

The tendency exists now to favour quality assurance appraisal based on professional integration criteria to the detriment of academic standards. It is to be feared now that some training courses may be left out because of their lack of immediate job-related utility. These courses may be deeply weakened, leading actually to diminish the training and research potential plus the creativity supported by a significant pluridisciplinarity.

The impact of BMD reform upon the strategy of HEIs.

Within a European competitive context, HEIs will be induced to better define and highlight their assets on which they are likely to reinforce their attractiveness and fame:

- Scientific excellence rooted on quality of research. This asset is based on the assumption that political choices support the concerned research teams.
- Relevance of training offering, quality of diplomas delivery modalities, professional integration of the students.
- Student accommodations, cultural and linguistic standing of the university environment.

Within a context that implies significant choices and where the importance given to those strategies may count for much, there are risks leading to streamline the HEIs in research and training, with consequences on the recruitment policy of teachers-researchers.

5. Considering quality

The performance of the French accreditation system

As mentioned above, the MSTP falls under the scope of the Ministry of Education. It is responsible for the habilitation (French meaning of accreditation) of national diplomas. Evaluation criteria are embedded in accreditation application forms but the opinions of the experts committee are not

released. Follow-up committees and other academic commissions that exist, operate only on advisory capacity. The final decision belongs to the Ministry.

The obligation for internal evaluation Although Internal evaluation of programmes and teachers carried out by students are now an obligation for HEIs, in addition to others types of evaluation (i.e. external evaluation run by CNE and other bodies described below) they are not yet fully exerted and improvements are expected considering

- Evaluation of academic systems and consistency of the training offering by the students ;
- In-house evaluation of strategies, training schemes, training outcomes and future of graduates, made by the HEIs themselves.

External evaluation of quality assurance procedures of the HEIs

Relevance of internal evaluation systems implemented by each HEI will be appraised by CNE. This kind of evaluation should start in the forthcoming months. This obligation is intended to enhance the implementation of internal quality assurance procedures in HEIs.

Summary

- The outlook of programmes remains difficult to understand for any students except those who know the best way to advance in their studies and to get the high-quality level degrees.
- Quality assessment of programmes is undertaken at Governmental level, but stays unclear for the HE community.
- The compliance between elitism and democratisation result in fragmenting the HE system.
- The professional orientation of programmes makes the system more complex.
- The BMD reform is an opportunity to simplify and to narrow the scope of courses and diplomas. However, this reform will affect the HEIs strategies and management practices. New evaluation processes and tools are being implemented aiming at the reinforcement of internal quality assurance awareness.

V - Teaching staff

Considering teaching staff, the issue of quality is traditionally perceived through the CNU approach in addition to an HEI assessment. The question of quality is to be considered due to the changes of training possibilities and new categories of students. Academic quality assessment is not directly handled yet.

1. Facts

As briefly analysed in part 1, several status of teaching staff coexist. Universities in France hire mainly teachers-researchers. It must be kept in mind that universities have the mission to disseminate knowledge and to develop research activities that are strongly linked to the training offering. The BMD reform keeps maintaining the bridge between training and research. Besides, teaching coming from secondary level were hired in the 80s to comply with HE expansion (they represent about 15 % of overall teaching staff). Therefore, teachers-researchers and teachers from high schools are not recruited on the same basis.

The selection process set up at the national level (for qualification, that entitles the teacher-researcher to apply for recruitment) is acknowledged to ensure quality on high-level credentials. On the contrary, the lack of codified recruitment procedures at the HEIs level result in generating a wide diversity of situations in the recruitment frame.

Most evaluations carried out in HEIs don't assess the on-going quality of teachers but are mainly purpose-built on advancement issues.

The quality of pedagogical issues is not formally evaluated at any level, including for the teachers of secondary education who don't lead research projects but devote only to teaching in HEIs.

However, the Ministry of Education is keen on implementing teacher-training support in universities. The current trend is to put more emphasis on ways to disseminate high level pedagogical knowledge and methods among teachers-researchers (who lack peculiar pedagogical training). Funded in 1989, 14 training centers (CIES, Centres d'Initiation à l'Enseignement Supérieur, part of the Ministry of Education and not under the umbrella of universities) have authority to coach young PhD students wishing to become teachers-researchers. Each year, CIES monitor altogether a proportion of 2,000 to 2,700 students (this number varies considerably among the 14 CIES). 2,400 students are being monitored for the period 2003-04. About 25,000 students have been trained from 1989, whose half of them are at the moment teaching in HEIs. The coaching period for 3 years is granted by a financial bonus for the PhD students. The PhD students give lectures under supervision of a senior teacher-researcher.

2. Main outlines and goals

The high reaction capacity from the Government and HEIs to endorse the sharp increase in the number of students was real, but was not surrounded by a strong quality assurance awareness.

The two-level standardized selection process (Government and HEI level) ensures quality based on title and academic skills. But problems remain:

- the assessment of pedagogical activities does not exist as such.
- Qualification, selection and recruitment criteria remain unclear and too various among the disciplines for most of applicant teachers and more generally for the public.
- Reactivity in teachers recruitment is mainly the responsibility of the Government, with a view to gathering a vivid community of top-notch skills. But the lack of monitoring in training offering and the no-selective process for the enrolment of students result in diminishing the reactivity of HEIs in the recruitment system.

Moreover, the lack of human resources management that could monitor and boost career plans in favour of the teaching community is another weakness of the quality assurance system. The Ministry of Education is primarily responsible for HR management, whereas HEIs have little power on this point. The Ministry calls the shots for setting up budgetary orientations (teachers are paid on governmental public funds only). The HEIs sketch the delineation of disciplines CNU, positions to be applied for, teachers-researchers bodies and scientific profiles of these positions. Administrative status

refrains from adapting the number of positions to large recruitment campaigns. Stop-and-go evolutions of numbers of students can hardly be taken into account. Demographic constraints (foreseeable retiring teaching staff while the number of students is stabilising) should entail a more targeted and predictive monitoring of the teaching staff. Massification must not nevertheless hide the variety of situations faced up in teaching programmes and teaching sectors.

Frequent on-going debate on the teaching status is basically related to the BMP reform and to the position of the French Conference of the Presidents of Universities (CPU). Most presidents are eager to keep a wide training offering in the institutions, including an array of levels (bachelors, masters, doctorates) and their related options. The logical way is to promote the Doctorate level which should play a key role for masters and doctorate components of HEIs. This orientation obliges Presidents to attract and hire researchers (high- powered or potential researchers). Proposals have just been put forward to modify and discriminate the teacher status (additionally with the intention to supporting the attractiveness of the job itself, as the upcoming turn-over will require numerous teachers-researchers). Some Presidents are likely to recapture the wage bill management (1st stage) and then to individualize teacher status and wages with a view to boost the attractiveness of their universities in a European context of mobility. It is feared by some that this orientation turn the Presidents into chief executives of private companies.

3. Current situation and on-going changes

Teaching status is always being reformed and the reliability of national monitoring is weakening as a consequence. The initial decree on teachers-researchers status has been modified 14 times since 1984, articles have been changed up to 35 times. To get an overview of this non-stabilized debate and the vivacity of lobbies in the HEI system, 102 modifications of teachers-researchers status occurred out of the 205 changes of the decree in 18 years...

The debate is mainly focused on status and funds issues. Since 1984, teaching obligations have been clearly defined. The amount of teaching time depends on the bodies the teachers belong to.

On the other hand, the debate is targeted on the grants delivered by the Ministry. HEIs receive grants from the Ministry to cover teaching overtime hours and functioning expenditures. The global subsidies are granted on criteria connected to each set of disciplines ("humanities", "Mathematics") and to their goals (professional or research orientation). The grant operating process has been modelled (SANREMO software). The use of the grants is decided by the HEIs governing body. But HEIs components often complain about discrepancies between the amount of grants and their real needs decided upon unsound or unbalanced criteria. This results from the lack of transparency on governmental grants and a weak internal monitoring system on real needs and expenditures of the components. The components ask for equitable share of the grants and the governing body considers the Ministry responsible for providing too low amount of grants that oblige the HEIs to share poverty with its components. Besides, HEIs compare themselves unwisely: letters and humanities HEIs compare themselves to scientific institutions that compare themselves to engineering schools (which benefit from higher governmental grants).

4. Impacts and subsequent questioning

The implementation of the BMD may impact on the recruiting policy of teaching staff and therefore may affect the way to evaluate the academic quality (pedagogical issues). Two main effects may come up: on the recruitment policy of HEIs, and on the teachers status.

As masters degrees will to be linked to laboratories, the recruitment policy will consist in enrolling teachers for these labs only, as a way to obtain and justify the habilitation of masters, that would be a major factor of identity, attractiveness and good ranking of the HEIs. The ability to teach is actually left out by the quality assurance systems; it should remain as it is now in the near future. The best teachers are likely to enter the best HEIs (as the current situation), and the new qualified teachers may be hired in the masters. Should such a case occur, the risk should be to assign the less efficient researchers only to bachelor levels.

The teacher status may also change because of the research activity weights differently in the various missions of TR. Recent published reports recommended to break down status obligations according to the amount of time allotted to research. But the criteria on which the choice should be done remain unsound for many TR: what is an efficient research? Should applied research be set apart from other types of research? Will TR who don't devote much time to research be obliged to teach at bachelor degree? Do TR who advocate research be partially free of teaching? Another risk does exist: the HEIs

benefit from teachers coming from secondary level, they may attract the best teachers of this bodie in the HE system, weakening the secondary schools skills as far.

5. Considering quality

Evaluating the quality of the teaching staff relies on the evolution of training offering that may be shortly influenced by the BMD reform itself. Today the quality issue for teaching staff complies more with the selection and recruitment process than the achievements of common academic quality standards. Students completion rates are the unique but weak and disputable means to assess the academic quality should they remain apart from a more comprehensive internal quality evaluation device.

Summary

- A two-level standardized selection process ensures quality based on teachers credentials.
- Academic quality is not formally evaluated.
- Most evaluations on teaching staff handle with advancement issues.
- Whereas competition is increasing among HEIS, neither the Government nor the institutions is yet able to implement sound and reliable quality assessment on teaching.

VI - Students

1. Facts

In the 1960s, about 400 000 students attended universities. In 2003, students in universities are 1, 44 million out of 2,23 million in the whole HEI system. This HE expansion has fully modified the student profiles. A large number of students enrolling universities are less prepared to the academic expectations (e.g. significant personal homework is required, pre-requisites of a high level of cultural and basic knowledge; students lack follow-up and evaluation in the completion of their degree cycle).

However, massification has not phased in extensive changes in the social spectrum of the students. Whereas the absolute number of workers' children have increased from 91 000 to 133 000 students (from 1975 to 2001), their proportion in the overall student population holds steady. The proportion of student whose parents are executives have been rising steadily (40 000 students in 2001).

A national student-watch organisation brought out that students coming from low-class backgrounds were selected for financial reasons. The problem is more complex and does not rely exclusively on financial issues (entrance requirements to HEIs is easy providing students passed the Baccalaureate). The main reasons that bring about selection are numerous: lack of adequate working methods, weak cultural and knowledge background, etc. First-level cycles notably face up this situation.

One must however keep in mind trends of impoverishment of the student population.

2. Main outlines and stakes in the debates

A rejected selectivity but a strong demand for quality and effectiveness in HEIs

The French paradox is that students (and their parents) turn down the idea of a selective entry to universities. Low tuition fees and non-selectivity (except being graduated from high school (Baccalaureate) are considered to be two pillars of the French democratic HE system.

A large part of students desire to benefit from the best training offering and rush into the short-term selective systems (that are not encompassed by universities but proposed by autonomous institutes or post-secondary high schools). As for the best Baccalaureate graduates, they attempt to pass the highest selective exams to attend schools of excellence and engineer schools. Regarding universities, they are asked to award high quality diplomas plus take into account the no-selective but overwhelming entry of every kind of public. Besides, democratisation entailed to disseminate numerous training sites all over the country. Small or medium-sized HEIs are requested to deliver high quality training offering (ideally connected to job-opportunities), to provide amenities and better living conditions for students and teachers, plus to foster an offensive scientific policy based on national and international research. For those HEIs, the seek for effectiveness is combined with the need for attractiveness (of student and teachers and researchers).

The negative image of universities according to numerous students

After high school, student with a Baccalaureate degree adopt an effective strategy to get a job-related diploma rapidly. Those students are eager to integrate rapidly the job-market with the possibility to complete their studies afterwards (and then avoiding the hidden but high selectivity of the first and second year in the universities).

University is considered as a stopgap solution for an appreciable number of students. This may lead a short-term strategy or a succession of stop-and-go ambitions to gain a high level degree (5 year-study). As a conclusion, 2-year vocational courses are highly but clearly selective at the entry whereas university courses are unsoundly selective and eliminative throughout the length of the studies.

Once in universities, students mostly do not know much about the institution they belong to- they reckon they are "users" rather than "beneficiaries and evolving citizens". Contrary to many HEIs in other countries (particularly in Anglo-Saxon areas), French universities refrain from launching actions to raise sense of belonging to the institution and to build up proud among students, who spend most of their student life on the campus. Too few students know the institutional aspects and the functioning of their institution (except for the basic procedures regarding the completion of their courses and ways to pass exams). The consequence is that most students do not devote time to citizenship in their university. Participation rate to students elections are dramatically low. Each of the governing bodies

in the universities can include a student representative. Students are also able to sit on advisory boards. Students have obtained extensive rights but do not take them over at full capacity. Weak political interest, change in public profiles, low participation in the democratic process lead to misunderstandings with the HEIs executives and presidency.

As for teachers, most of them do not pass so much time with their students, as they are involved in their laboratories activities and have a light knowledge of the overall university they belong to, their training course excepted. The notion of “institution culture” and more generally “universitary culture” is certainly a point to be developed taking advantage of the BMD reform.

Professional orientation for students vs. knowledge transfer from teachers

The career path of teachers-researchers is appraised mainly through their scientific publications. The students have the strong willingness to enter the job-market once accomplished their studies. The discrepancy between the teacher goals and the student ambitions is increasing; it can also be pointed out between the different generations of teachers-researchers. The BMD reform is supposed to modify the teaching offering, diplomas recognition, student mobility (and teachers mobility) and may affect even more the teacher unrest: doubt about their profession and the significance of it.

A high demand for professional orientation

Students seek for effectiveness in their studies. This demand results in highly diversifying the training courses: fragmented teaching offering, enlargement of potential opening on the job-market, demand for job-related courses. Students express the willingness to secure their future and to pursue a step-by-step studying process.

The raise of life-long learning issues

In the coming years, one of the most significant change will come from the strengthening of life-long learning and continuous learning. A new public, more adult and demanding, with special requirements (strongly linked to professional needs) will attend universities. The evaluation of quality may play a significant role.

3. Current situations and on-going changes

One of the most important difficulties is the insufficient information relative to Student's representations, expectations and wills concerning the HE system.. There are no ways and means to get evidence together to look into the students behaviours rationally. Neither in HEIs individually (with some exceptions) nor at governmental levels one knows much about students. Poorly involved in the HEIs management, the evaluation processes keep them away. This statement gets a significant point of interest while the BMD reform is now being implemented.

4. Impacts and subsequent questioning

The questions of mobility (national and international mobility, for students, teachers and teachers-researchers) and competition among HEIs appear to be key issues to be discussed in the upcoming months. The needs for adequate student accommodations, financial support and international degrees equivalences are turning into substantial topics of debate..

5. Considering quality

At this point, students are eager to obtain quality appraisals to make wiser choices, especially within a context of internationalisation of studies. But they are not the pivotal issue of the current evaluation systems.

Summary

- Selectivity is publicly rejected by students whereas their demand for quality and effectiveness in HEIs is getting higher.
- A large part of students adopt a strategy to have a job-related diploma rapidly.
- Few students and teachers know much about the functioning of their institution.

- Formal evaluation processes do not fully integrate students opinions.
- A lack of comprehensive information on the students desires and expectations
- Questions of mobility and competition among HEIs will raise debates on quality assurance in order to clarify the equivalences matching and appraise quality of the HEIs.