

Training & Employment

A FRENCH NEWSLETTER FROM CEREQ AND ITS ASSOCIATED CENTRES

SERVICES FOR PERSONS AT HOME: ISSUES OF PROFESSIONALISATION

The growth of services for persons at home, often confused with the broader category of proximity services within which they fall, has given rise to a wealth of government initiatives that have in turn generated new forms of activities. These have contributed to a certain confusion in a field previously composed of two branches of professional activities, home help and domestic services, which converge today around the idea of family employment. In addition, new tools for administering the wage relationship — the service-employment cheque and the intermediate agency — are difficult to reconcile with the professionalisation of these jobs that is nonetheless evoked by all the partners involved.

Considered for nearly ten years as a potential job pool that is only waiting for rational exploitation, activities related to services for persons at home have been the focus of numerous development schemes. While attention has mainly been brought to bear on the number of jobs that the different public-aid measures have helped to create, Céreq chose to investigate the nature of the jobs created and the sector's ability to professionalise its employees.¹

Various studies conducted at the European level have brought out the considerable needs for home help.² Thus, the scope of the relevant job pool depends, in each country, not only on the demographic structure but also on other social, cultural, and financial choices relating to:

- The role of women in the society. These choices may or may not favour their professional activity;³
- The ways the different categories of publics involved are aided. Certain measures may favour accommodation in specialised institutions (for the elderly, the ill and mentally ill or the handicapped), or home care (see "In Focus" for the assistance provided). For childcare, they may privilege collective solutions in terms of facilities (day nurseries) or individual solutions (child-care allowances).

It should be noted that in France, most assistance positions (see "In Focus") have given rise to fairly strict employment regulations when such functions are carried out in an institutional context, in which case they give rise to the creation of distinct "occupations". When carried out at home, these same functions are much less regulated (with the exception of paramedical care): they are often lumped together under the generic label of services to persons at home or family employment, and they do not require particular training or diplomas.

Not only can the scope of the needs for home help vary from one country to another, but the forms of satisfaction are far from homogeneous. Laville has demonstrated the existence of two possible paths of development, the American and the Swedish.⁴ She also observes that, "In the beginning of the 1990s, the European countries seemed to hesitate over the choice of the model, seeking to reconcile two constraints—limiting the decrease in remunerations and limiting the rise in compulsory pay deductions." In what follows, we shall attempt to analyse the choices made in France at the end of the 1980s and some of their consequences.

1. This study was carried out under a research contract between Céreq and the General Planning Commission. See L. Causse, C. Fournier, and C. Labryère, *Le développement des emplois familiaux. Effets sur les métiers de l'aide à domicile*, Céreq Document no. 121 (Marseille, 1997).
2. See in particular J.L. Laville, *Les services de proximité en Europe* (Paris: Syros, 1992).
3. See J. L. Laville, *Les initiatives locales en Europe* (Paris: CRIDA, 1996), p. 11.

4. ". . . in its most schematic form, [the American model] consists of increasing jobs at the expense of remunerations . . . with the decrease in wage costs functioning as the level that permits the creation of employment. Under these circumstances, services provided at home become profitable for the companies or household employers By contrast, Sweden has created community activities marked by a concern for egalitarianism and social responsibility Services for the elderly depend mainly on the municipalities and are practically free for the user." Laville, *Les initiatives locales en Europe*, pp. 18-20.

Changes in Home-Help Policies in France since 1987

Until 1987, France had largely opted for the Swedish model, whereby the response to the home-help needs of certain categories of the population consisted of public assistance in one of three forms:

- payment of a cash allowance for handicapped persons, who might or might not use it to pay for home-help services (with no monitoring of the effectiveness of the aid);⁵
- in-kind services (hours of household help) financed by the pension funds, with a contribution from beneficiaries calculated on the basis of their income. The need for this service led to the creation of domestic-help organisations employing a very large number of female workers placed at the disposition of beneficiaries.
- government subsidies for personal-assistance services (covering about 50 % of the wage costs for each assistant post) for the handicapped, as a provision of services, billed below the real cost.

The needs of other publics, particularly those of economically active households, were not eligible for any form of assistance; thus, only the most comfortable households had recourse to "domestic employees"⁶ as private employers. But in the context of this informal relationship, there was a great deal of undeclared work, which allowed households to avoid paying social security contributions for their employees.

Since 1987, lowering labour costs of household employers has been held to be the most effective means of increasing employment. Initially, this is accomplished through exemption from social-security contributions for certain categories of such employers (persons over 70 years of age or the handicapped, families with young children). This lowering of the final cost of the service for the user is then reinforced and expanded through a tax deduction extended to all taxable households.

A parallel measure authorises the creation of organisations responsible for placing employees and assisting in the administration of work contracts between private employers (who benefit from social-security exemptions) and their employees. Although these "intermediate" organisations offer a similar service to that of provider organisations who supply their own personnel (recruitment, replacement, time sheets, pay slips), they do not benefit from the same exemptions.

5. Third Party Complementary Allowance allocated on the basis of income.

6. "Domestic employees" is a generic term designating all employees of private individuals covered by the domestic employees' collective agreement, including cleaning women, child minders, household aides, cooks, etc.

From 1987 to 1995, employment by private individuals accounted for the creation of some 70,000 full-time jobs.

This group of measures contributed to a considerable increase in the number of household employers (47 % from 1987 to 1994) as well as in the number of declared family employees (23 %). In most instances, however, the assignment is of an extremely part-time nature: in 1994, the weekly average for home help was 8 hours, and very few employees (about 2 out of 10) managed to arrive at half-time work.

The most recent stimulus for family employment came in 1995 with the implementation of the service-employment cheque, which automatically deducts social security payments, as a means of simplifying administrative procedures for declaring and paying employees. Originally restricted to short assignments (less than 8 hours a week), this measure can now be used to pay full-time employees. After one year of experimentation (through 1995), it was used by nearly 25 percent of household employers and had at the same time contributed to increasing their numbers. During this first phase, substitution for other methods of remuneration remained quite limited.

Thus, over the past ten years, France's home-help scene has undergone considerable change. The number of "domestic-services" employees (*i.e.* those working for private individuals) has shown a dramatic increase, which has translated into the creation of some seventy thousand full-time-equivalent (FTE) jobs from 1987 to 1995. During the same period, the domestic-help organisations recorded only seven thousand additional FTE jobs, marking a break with previous rates of increase.

The expansion of the service supply in a very individualised form, somewhat akin to the self-employment model, has not failed to affect the nature of the jobs themselves or the conditions of employment and professionalisation of those involved in these activities.

Destructuring Effects of Employment Policy at the Level of the Occupational Branches

The clear distinction between two categories of home workers, namely household employees (going back to the traditional figure of the domestic) and home help (relating instead to the social worker) has given way to a certain confusion of types, with two new and still evolving kinds of employees joining the existing ones:

- a figure close to the self-employment model, namely the cleaning woman with multiple employers, who maintains

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commercial rather than wage-earning relations with her clients, particularly when the "clients" pay her with service-employment cheques;

- a hybrid figure, namely the delegated home-help worker, employed in part by a home-help organisation and in part by the households where she intervenes, in function of the income level of the users. Indeed, above a certain income ceiling, it is more economical for the elderly to employ help via an intermediate agency than to pay the bill for the home-help service directly.

The two traditional figures reflected two totally distinct activity sectors:

- "domestic services," composed of all those employed by private individuals and covered by the national collective agreement for "home employees" signed in 1980. The main feature of this agreement lies in the tax deduction offered to employers, amounting to one-third of the formal rate for the "hours of responsible presence," which are "hours of watching a natural person, without real work," up to 75 percent of the hours spent in the home. This possibility applies only to certain kinds of "family-type" work stations that entail monitoring functions (children, invalids, dependent persons). Night duty for these kinds of jobs is also authorised under certain conditions. The agreement anticipates surcharges for seniority accumulated with the same household employer; this is calculated in terms of a percentage of the base wage of each of the five qualification levels.

- the home-help sector, largely made up of household assistants (now home help) and family workers, plus paramedical staff. These workers, when covered by one of the three collective agreements for home help, receive a fixed allowance for travel between several households within the same half-day of work. The seniority scale takes into account experience acquired in the branch. Employees benefit from existing legislation on continuing training and a contingency fund.

After many years of willfully separate existence, the social partners of the two branches have now begun to talk to each other. Indeed, many employees belong to both branches at the same time, as we have seen for the "mixed" activities. Home-help organisations that have created intermediate agencies have been led to supervise, indirectly, employees placed in the context of family jobs and assigned by the collective agreements to the "domestic services" sector. This process has also led them to expand their "clientele" by turning to economically active households in need of home maintenance or child minding. The differences in remuneration, contingency funds, training, travel allowances, and so forth as elaborated in the agreements of the two sectors have become palpable because many employees have experienced both statuses. In addition, the existence of the intermediate agencies has revealed needs that could not be met by traditional services (weekend interventions for tasks relating to daily-life assistance, or night

duty for monitoring), which has led the latter to introduce more flexibility into their agreements (authorisation for Sunday work, for example).

For employees of private individuals placed on the traditional domestic-services market, these changes have had positive effects: apart from the decrease in undeclared work, the sharp rise in the volume of activity has permitted an average increase of ten hours of work per month per employee. The average monthly work time went from forty-one hours in 1986 to fifty-one in 1994, and the collective agreement has also undergone positive changes (contingency fund, continuing training). But the service-employment cheque may compromise these advances if it gradually comes to replace other forms of wage relations, notably that of the intermediate agency. In the absence of a work contract for all assignments of less than eight hours a week, employees may find themselves extremely powerless vis-à-vis employers tempted to behave more like clients than employers and overlooking both their own formal responsibilities and the rights of their employees concerning vacations, holidays, and so on.

On the other hand, for household maintenance services employees, the competition from non-profit agencies affecting part of their usual clientele has led to a deterioration of their employment conditions. A portion of the interventions previously depending on home-help services, with

The social partners are hoping for an improvement in the image of home-help occupations, notably through certification. But this very process runs the risk of creating barriers for candidates with a low educational level, even though they might have the necessary interpersonal skills.

the advantages implied (travel time, vocational training, seniority, etc.) is now carried out under the status of family employment. Thus, household assistants who seek more work must often accept assignments of this kind. The growing number of employers has numerous consequences, in terms of remuneration, regularity of payment of wages, administrative entanglements in case of illness or job-related injury, vacations, and so on.

The latest arrivals in the home-help sector are more and more often recruited exclusively by agency structures to carry out assignments that are totally identical to those of the household assistants, but without enjoying their status. In the absence of a collective employer with legal responsibility for them, they have little chance of acquiring training to complement their experience.

Forms of Employment at Odds with the Professionalisation of the Sector

The survey among organisation heads and their female employees showed that the professional know-how of the latter lay mainly in the ability to maintain a distance at two distinct levels:

- in relation to their own domestic values and know-how;
- but also in relation to the multiplicity of individual relationships in which they are involved.

On the first point, it seems that the basic role of training is to provide another frame of reference that will allow each agent to reexamine her ways of doing things, as well as the related value systems in order to meet demands for service that vary from one household to another. If initial training may permit the transmission of a professional ideal, professional know-how is forged in daily practice, on the condition that such practice is also subject to review and analysis.

On the second point, the idea of maintaining a distance goes back to the unique, subjective nature of each intervention. These are carried out in the user's home, and most take place in his or her presence, thus placing the agents at the heart of family relations and involving them in that history. They must demonstrate considerable technical and interpersonal skills in face of varied situations. Entering the home of a new client implies creating a new relationship and finding the right position to assume, one which takes into account not only the needs but also the fears and expectations of the other. Remaining professional means finding the right distance in each situation in order to remain attuned and receptive and act in such a way as to avoid any relationship of dependency, in one direction or the other. This requires employees to be able to distance themselves from different situations, some of which are extremely trying—frequent confrontations with the prospect of death, repeated bereavements, transfer phenomena (granddaughter/grandmother, mother/child), but also, on occasion, disrespect, sexual harassment, and so on.

Obtaining the CAFAD⁷ permits these interpersonal skills to be recognised. Preparatory training, limited to those who are currently employed, is mainly based on the experience of concrete work situations. The social partners

7. Certificate of Aptitude for Home-Help Functions, created in 1988.

are hoping that the new diploma instituted in 1995 at the initial training level will contribute to improving the image of the home-help occupations. But this development is not without risks for the future of the sector, insofar as it might lead to the creation of barriers hindering candidates whose low level of schooling compromises their chances for passing an "academic" entry exam, even though they may have the necessary interpersonal skills.

In order to allow home-help workers to overcome their isolation and break the silence surrounding the emotional involvement, the creation of spaces for discussion (continuing training courses and group supervision) seems indispensable. This presumes the existence of real "service enterprises" (non-profit organisations or commercial operations) able to organise and finance these activities, which are not directly productive.⁸ On other points as well, the existence of such mediating structures between users and service workers seems essential, namely for:

- ensuring a certain possibility of career advancement, insofar as the organisation is able to guarantee the most fitting match between the services expected and the home worker's professional aptitudes;
- encouraging a positive outcome for conflict situations by intervening between user and service worker to monitor and call to order both employees and clients in relation to the respect of certain rules and mutual commitments.

The tools created since 1987 to encourage home-help jobs in France, especially the service-employment cheque, are not oriented to such an organisation of supply insofar as they favour the development of informal relations and the isolation of employees. "The spread of the service-employment cheque, which does not provide for the remuneration of the organisation, goes against the positive growth of these services. . . ."⁹

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8. Financing would be possible by including these activities in the sales price of the service, which could be negotiated with certain funding bodies for this kind of service (local and regional governments, pension funds, etc.).

9. A. Fouquet, "Le concept d'emploi de proximité," *Etudes et recherches de l'ISERES* no. 141 (1995).

briefing

▼ Updates

Globalisation: Vocational Training and the Occupations of the Future

In preparation for the International Day of French-Speaking Communities, a meeting organised by the Francophone Agency for Higher Education was held at the National Conservatory for Arts and Engineering (CNAM) in Paris on 18-20 March. Discussions were oriented around three topics:

- "Globalisation: Resist or Invent?"
- "Inforoutes and Intermediation: Universal Multimedia Center and Virtual University"
- "Globalisation: Vocational Training and Occupations of the Future"

Céreq was particularly solicited on the last topic, which brought together training organisers from all the French-speaking countries, as well as countries where the French-language tradition still exists even if it is not dominant (Rumania, for example). Philippe Méhaut participated in a round table on life-long training, while Richard Bieganski and Jean-Frédéric Vergnies presented Céreq's studies on labour-market entry and local observatories.

The issue of the professionalisation of studies was central to the discussions around this third topic. All the countries represented expressed their concern about the future of their young people. Indeed, the school-to-work transition of diploma-holders was an overriding objective expressed by each of them, even when conditions for access to employment are good.

Contact: *Jean-Frédéric Vergnies, Céreq*

A Comparative Study of Innovative Schemes in Seven European Countries: First Results of the Intequal Project

A preliminary report on the Intequal project outlines the major features and functioning of dual qualifications which are oriented towards both employment and higher education. Several aspects of structure, contents, and didactics are relevant for the dual qualification schemes:

- Flexibility in curriculum design. Several countries' schemes have introduced flexible curriculum structures, with frequent use of modules. Such structures are above all intended to connect and facilitate the integration of general and vocational subjects or learning units.
- Emphasis on developing personal competence. Several concepts and terms used in the various national schemes centre on a new approach to learning which aims at developing personal competence in a complex, active way that goes well beyond the division into general and vocational abilities.
- Collaboration among teachers. The integration of academic and vocational qualifications calls for a closer co-operation between general-subject and vocational teachers. In addition, the teacher in an active learning environment assumes a new function as adviser rather than instructor.
- Co-operation between schools and companies. Most of the schemes link school- and work-based learning, including mandatory practical assignments (France, The Netherlands, Sweden) or supplementary ones (England) or traineeships (Norway, Germany). This approach implies a need for functional co-operation between schools and companies, and also between teachers and trainers or workers.

A key question running throughout this investigation is the extent to which vocational and general education are or can be integrated. The evidence suggests that the various ways of combining them are fairly independent of different course categories or easily adaptable to them. If this proves to be the case, it means that there is considerable opportunity for exchange and transfer of experience across schemes and national systems.

Contact : *Henri Eckert, Jean-Louis Kirsch, Céreq*

Increasing Cross-Border Co-operation

Céreq's associated centre in Rouen is presently developing contacts with the Universities of Brighton and Sussex within the framework of the European "Interreg" programme aimed at increasing cross-border co-operation. A meeting held in Brighton on 16-19 February 1997 permitted numerous exchanges among academics in the fields of education, social psychology, sociology of social policies and new technologies. It generated plans for two collaborative projects around one of the programme's themes, "co-operation in the areas of vocational training, education, research and technology". These projects involve, on the one hand, the creation of networks for distribution and technological innovations aimed at SME-SMI in cross-border regions and, on the other, a research and training activity around the basic know-how of disadvantaged communities. Following a second meeting held in April, a conference on adult education has been scheduled to take place.

Contact: *Alain Kokosowski, University of Rouen, tel. (332) 35 89 00 57*

▼ New Publications



La construction des diplômes professionnels en Allemagne et en France

[The Development of Vocational Diplomas in Germany and France]

✍ Martine Möbus and Eric Verdier

In both Germany and France, government, employers' organisations and unions work together to develop vocational diplomas. Nonetheless, this process takes specific forms in each of the two countries. Thus, the nature of the diploma itself, the respective role of each player and the rhythm of the reforms differ considerably from one side of the Rhine to the other. The forms of recognition of the diplomas attest to the tensions underlying the two certification systems, both of which are faced with increasing economic and social instability.

Céreq *Bref* no. 130 (April 1997). Available free on request.

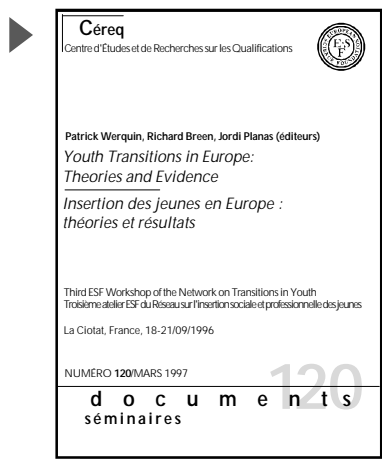
Insertion des jeunes en Europe : théories et résultats

[Youth Transitions in Europe: Theories and Evidence]

Third European Science Foundation workshop of the Network on the Social and Vocational Transition of Young People, La Ciotat (France), 18-21 September 1996. Papers in French and English with bilingual abstracts.

✍ Patrick Werquin, Richard Breen and Jordi Planas (eds.)

Over the past few years, an annual workshop has brought together researchers from all the European countries to address the issue of the youth transition. The goal of the meeting held in La Ciotat in 1996 was to bring out the links between empirical and/or statistical results and the theories that allow these to be understood. Among the twenty-odd presentations, most authors focussed on the transition from initial training to the various itineraries of young people on the labour market. The articles deal with the question of the school-to-work transition in technical terms (methods for improving the comparability of country data bases, for example) or theoretically (such as the way young people grasp the school-to-work transition). Some contributions deal explicitly with the international comparison while others involve only



L'insertion des jeunes «à la française» : vers un ajustement structurel ?

[The Youth Transition "French-Style": Towards a Structural Adjustment?]

✍ Eric Verdier (LEST, Aix-en-Provence)

The youth transition in France seems to have reached an impasse. The overview provided by this article brings out French society's massive investment in vocational education and training along with its inability to reap the profits. Young people attain ever-increasing levels of training but have great difficulty entering the labour market.

The author's view of the school-to-work transition is informed by a "societal analysis" that permits the identification of structural coherences within a single country. He shows how, within this perspective, the spread of education, the role of diplomas and transition schemes and the functioning of the labour market join together to weaken young people's links to employment. In this respect, comparisons with German and the UK provide a particularly enlightening counterpoint.

Travail et emploi no. 69 (April 1996), Ministry of Labour, La Documentation française.

one country. Most of them have direct implications in terms of political economy or, more broadly, the functioning of the labour market encountered by young people.

The La Ciotat workshop was the third and last to be held under the auspices of the European Science Foundation, but the network will continue to operate under the name of the "European Research Network on the Youth Transition". The 1997 meeting, to be held in Dublin on 18-20 September, will address the links between failures in initial training and labour-market exclusion as well as ways of combatting poverty and inequality.

Document no. 120, Seminaires series, March 1997.

▼ In Focus

Financing the Demand for Home-Help Services in France in 1996

The term "family jobs" covers a large number of work situations whose common feature is that the work is carried out in a private home. Six categories of functions that may be assumed by "home workers" have been distinguished:

- help with daily life (home maintenance, errands and preparation of meals, laundry, minor repairs and gardening);
- assistance in basic activities of daily life (dressing, washing, eating, moving around);
- nursing care;
- daytime or nighttime monitoring;
- child minding;
- tutoring.

In France, several kinds of financial aid coexist to encourage the growth of such home-help jobs.

For the most comfortable households, whether they are economically active or retired, these consist of income-tax deductions amounting to 50 percent of the sums paid for a family job (up to 45,000 francs a year).

For elderly persons over 70 years of age, the handicapped or parents of children under 3 years of age, there is an exemption from employer social-security contributions as long as the service is rendered directly to that employer.

For the retired, the pension funds (or social services) contribute payment for the intervention of a household assistant employed by an organization. The number of hours is fixed, and the contribution of the pension fund depends on the income level.

For dependent elderly persons, payment is available for a specific service according to resources. The sum to be paid varies according to the level of dependency, which is determined according to a payment scale. The payment is made directly to the body that sends a worker to perform the service or to the elderly person when he or she is the employer (on condition of providing wage receipts).

For the handicapped, third-party allowances are available according to resources (with no monitoring of their use).

For retired persons requiring home care after hospitalisation, the pension fund contributes 80 percent of the user's expenses up to a six-month ceiling.

For wage-earners, the works committee or the employer contributes to the financing of "home cheques" (on the model of restaurant cheques) allowing the household to pay bills from a home-service provider. In addition, two mechanisms have been introduced to simplify the wage relation between private-individual employers and their employees:

- intermediate organisations, which replace private-individual employers in certain of their functions, such as recruitment, time sheets, pay sheets, and organisation of replacements. This specific form of assistance in administering the work contract is billed either as a lump sum or according to the number of hours worked;
- the service-employment cheque, which is a means of individual payment. It exempts the private-individual employer from drawing up a work contract if the intervention does not exceed forty hours a month. It serves as a pay slip and saves the employer from calculating the social-security contributions owed to employees. These contributions are determined after the fact by specialised bodies which collect them automatically.

Chantal Labruyère

▼ **Formation Emploi**

Recent articles in Céreq's quarterly journal, no. 57: January-March 1997

SPECIAL REPORT:
AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION

La construction de l'articulation école-entreprise dans l'enseignement agricole (1820-1960)

[Developing the School-Business Link in Agricultural Education (1820-1960)]

✍ Michel Boulet

Agricultural education serves as a laboratory for the entire educational system, particularly in terms of pedagogy. The author retraces the history of this institution in order to bring out the origin and relevance of the link between school and production site—a question that is considered today to be decisive for improving the training of young people.

L'enseignement général, technologique et professionnel agricole en 1995-1996

[General, Technical, and Vocational Agricultural Education in 1995-1996]

✍ Michel Boulet

Using a statistical framework, this article presents the main trends in the evolution of agricultural education over the past ten years. This system alone educates some 160,000 students, mainly on Level V. The number of diplomas and vocational streams, as well as the average level of training, are on the rise. While the proportion of students coming from a farming background is declining, that of young women is increasing.

Alternances et mondes professionnels en agriculture

[Alternating Training Programmes and Occupational Worlds in Agriculture]

✍ Marie-Laure Chaix

Alternating training cannot continue to ignore the way it is used by occupational groups to transform their occupational know-how, increase their social visibility and institutionalise themselves. The growth of research on the relations between the educational system and the world of work, which are barely sketched out today, should help to develop alternating training.

Du néant à l'être: l'action des centres de formation professionnelle et de promotion agricole 1966-1996

[From Nothingness to Being: The Activity of Centres for Vocational Training and Agricultural Mobility 1966-1996]

✍ Jean-François Chosson

Created in 1965, the Centres for Vocational Training and Agricultural Mobility (CFPPA) have seen their qualification guidelines, training paths and evaluation methods evolve in function of larger economic conditions and political imperatives. They have served as a site of mediation in the sometimes contradictory relations between political leaders and social groups, where agricultural organisations have played an important role.

Extra Report

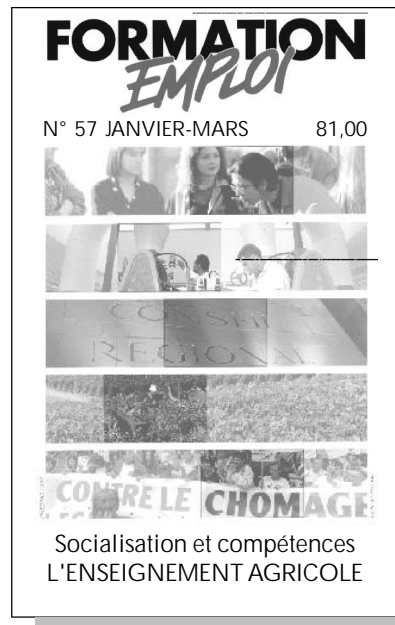
L'expérience de la précarité juvénile dans les espaces intermédiaires

[The Experience of Precariousness among Young People in Intermediate Spaces]

✍ Laurence Roulleau-Berger

The crisis of employment and salaried work has given rise to a dual society. In place of analyses based on exclusion, with their penchant for worst-possible scenarios, the author proposes an approach to identity-building. Outside the official circuits of training and school-to-work transition, young people are generating skills that could, in certain conditions, be transferred to the official labour market.

Whether such a transfer is desirable remains another question, insofar as it implicitly recognises the legitimacy of certain worlds and the illegitimacy of others.



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