

Training & Employment

A FRENCH NEWSLETTER FROM CEREQ AND ITS ASSOCIATED CENTRES

SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION AND AFTER: DO INEQUALITIES BETWEEN THE SEXES DEFY DIPLOMAS?

The rate of female activity has risen continuously over the past thirty-five years, and women now constitute 45 percent of the labour force. But this hardly means that differences between men and women on the labour market have disappeared. In particular, women's careers remain more sharply marked by extra-professional events. Nonetheless, the persistence of inequalities does not exclude the emergence of encouraging trends, and in this respect, the diploma seems to be an instrument of change.

Higher Levels, Reduced Inequalities

Two or three years after the end of initial training, the conditions encountered on the labour market are similar for young men and women with higher-education diplomas but significantly more differentiated for those with secondary-school vocational diplomas. (1) There is a disparity in the possibilities for access to employment among young men and young women. At the end of higher education, the gap in unemployment rates is low but it is significantly greater for lower diploma levels (vocational *baccalauréat* and CAP-BEP). Similarly, the difference in the possibilities for stabilising work activity through a permanent work contract largely depends on the diploma level attained—while these differences are tenuous at the highest levels, they become much more accentuated below the *baccalauréat*. Part-time activity mainly affects young women with a secondary level of study, while a large majority of young men—whatever their level—and young women with higher-education diplomas work full time (see Table 1).

1. Studies conducted by Céreq's EVA Observatory (National Observatory on Entries into Active Life). The following abbreviations are used throughout this article: CAP (vocational aptitude certificate), BEP (vocational studies certificate), DUT (university diploma of technology), BTS (higher technician certificate), DEA (advanced studies diploma) and DESS (higher specialised studies diploma).

After the most advanced training in higher education (Grandes Ecoles and graduate school), the large majority of men and women graduates have access to "manager" positions. There is a differential (+ 14 %) in favour of men, with women slightly more often classified in "intermediate occupations". But for the other training levels, the phenomenon of women "sliding" towards lower occupational categories assumes a totally different scope (see Table 2). Young men holding BTS/DUT diplomas are massively classified in "intermediate occupations", while their female counterparts are more often found in the "employees" category (the gaps exceed 30 %). Similarly, the large majority of vocational *baccalauréat* holders reaching the "intermediate occupations" category are men.

These differences in occupational position are accompanied by differences in the kind of jobs held: men are more numerous in production-oriented jobs (private-sector engineers and technical managers, technicians, supervisors, and operatives), while women are more present in jobs associated with service functions (administrative or sales manager or intermediate occupation in the private or public sector and employees). Here too, however, disparities between the sexes are lowest for graduates of the Grandes Ecoles and graduate schools (26 %) and increase at the lower levels (50 % for the BTS/DUT and over 60 % for vocational *baccalauréat* holders and CAP/BEP).

CENTRE D'ÉTUDES ET DE RECHERCHES SUR LES QUALIFICATIONS

Thus, young women from levels below the *baccalauréat* generally face much greater difficulties in making the school-to-work transition than young men. But at these training levels, they are not preparing for the same occupations. Indeed, guidance counselling is orientated by gender, with service or literary training for girls and industrial or vocational training for boys (see Table 1). The work worlds awaiting the two groups offer neither the same possibilities for labour-market entry nor the same professional recognition of know-how acquired through training or school diplomas. Training specialisations and specific conditions of labour-market entry can thus be related. In particular, we observe that individuals are assigned to more structured, favourable jobs after male industrial training programmes than after female tertiary programmes where young women find themselves competing with their more qualified counterparts.

On the other hand, the work worlds awaiting young men and young women are much closer after higher education. Even if the phenomenon of young women's "avoidance" of the most scientific and technical training continues, this is far from the "compartmentalisation" of training streams observed for the lower levels. Thus, following higher education, women and men enter the same segments of the labour market and for the most part attain the same professional goals. Gender disparities continue, but they are minimal. For these young graduates, there are more similarities than differences in the transition profiles of young women and young men. The diploma is thus a levelling factor between the sexes, and the access of young women to the highest levels helps to reduce differences at the beginning of working life.

Career: The Necessary Trade-Offs of Young Women Managers

The relative closeness of the professional situations observed at the beginning of working life among men and women coming out of some of the most respected higher training programmes (Bac + 5, DEA, DESS) gradually disappears. The examination of careers eight years after labour-market

The Rise in Women's Employment

Between 1986 and 1996, the number of women job-holders increased by 850,000 while the number of men dropped by 92,000. In fact, the continuous increase in the rate of labour-force participation of females over fifteen years of age went from 45.9 to 48.5 percent over the same period (reaching 80 % for women in the 25-39 age group in 1996). This was accompanied, however, by an increase in their rate of unemployment, which was 15.6 percent in 1996 (11.5 % for men) and a considerable rise in the number of part-time jobs (in 1996, 28.9 % of employed women worked part-time, as opposed to 4.6 % of employed men).

Among the 850,000 additional working women, 700,000 contributed to the growth of occupations that were already quite feminised. Female employment has thus become that much more concentrated: in 1996, six occupational groups, excluding managers, accounted for more than 60 percent of employed women (teachers, intermediate occupations in health and social work, civil servants, private-sector administrative employees, business employees, and those providing services directly to individuals). It should be noted that these categories covered only 12 percent of their male counterparts, who were also much more dispersed over the range of occupations.

New orientations can be distinguished, however: between 1986 and 1996, the proportion of women among the "managers and higher intellectual occupations" went from 27 to 34 percent, echoing the rise in their level of initial training. In 1991, five out of every ten women went on to higher education, as opposed to four out of every ten men. The increasing number of managerial jobs in the service sector during the 1980s gave women with the most degrees, like their male counterparts, access to the most qualified jobs.

entry reveals significant disparities according to gender.(2) Thus, the most promising professional beginnings—recognition of academic qualifications and access to managerial positions—do not completely insulate women's careers from the influence of extra-professional events. Initially, the conditions of labour-market entry for young women and young

2. Cf. the Céreq study by Thomas Couppié, Dominique Epiphane and Christine Fournier, "Débuts de carrières des hommes et des femmes cadres diplômés de l'Université", carried out with financial support from the French Association of Women University Graduates.

Table 1
Specialisations and Transition Indicators
by Diploma and Gender (in %)

	Men			Women			Rate of Unemployment (1)		Rate of Permanent Job Contracts (2)		Rate of Part-Time Work (2)	
	Manufact.	Service	Total	Manufact.	Service	Total	M	F	M	F	M	F
Diplomas held:												
Grad School/ Grandes Ecoles	55	45	100	24	76	100	3.6	5.4	89	81	3	9
BTS-DUT	63	37	100	11	89	100	3.2	4.3	82	81	3	6
Vocat. Bac	64	36	100	7	93	100	14.8	18.9	63	60	6	18
CAP, BEP	89	11	100	14	86	100	13.0	24.0	58	43	7	36

(1) 33 months after diploma

(2) Last job held

Source: Céreq

Table 2
Occupational Status
and Last Job Held by Gender (1)

	Rate of Managers		Rate of Intermediate Occupations		Rate of Employees, Workers		Production-Oriented Jobs (2)		Service-Related Jobs	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Diplomas held:										
Grad School/ Grandes Ecoles	83	69	13	26	1	3	42	16	58	84
BTS-DUT	5	4	82	50	12	46	61	12	39	88
Vocat. Bac	0	0	24	7	76	93	72	7	28	93
CAP, BEP	0	1	5	7	94	92	82	20	18	80

(1) Last job during the 33 months following diploma

(2) Engineers, technicians, supervisors, workers

Source: Céreq

men seem close, which reflects the similar family status (single, without children). But the period of professional development that follows coincides with the most intense events in the "building" of a family. The reorganisations undertaken with the forming of a couple and the birth of a first child also raise the question of the differentiated advancement of men and women in the professional domain. What are the consequences of family events on the professional life of each?

The analysis of men's and women's schedules over time is rich in information on the changing distribution of roles within the couple and the repercussions of this conjugal division in the area of employment. Changes in the respective shares of professional work, domestic work (including childcare) and leisure activities reflect the organisation of each partner and in particular the place reserved for the job. Among singles or couples without children, men and women divide their time similarly. A detailed study of domestic activities reveals certain disparities, but the respective shares of professional work and leisure activities are similar. What upsets this equitable distribution is the arrival of a child. While most men continue to engage in leisure activities, this is no longer the case for the mothers of young children. As for household tasks, men—when they participate—most often carry them out in the form of "assistance" or even "giving a hand." Many women indicate that they have sole responsibility, or almost, for housework. With regard to professional time, recent fathers either make no changes in their previous situation or envisage a change through a promotion coupled with a raise. None of them expresses the desire to reduce his working hours or reorganise his schedule.

If men are practically unanimous in their responses to the question of professional involvement, women with comparable diplomas, fall into two groups according to their professional behaviours:

- some recent mothers carry out their professional activity in areas (or ways) where their family least "disrupts" the

job, notably in the sectors (including the public service) or occupations (the professions) that offer more freedom in personal organisation. They sometimes opt for part-time work or a temporary interruption of their professional activity following events that punctuate family life;

- others, like those who remain single, work full time—and maintain long working hours—and continue to demonstrate considerable availability for their career at the cost of a highly structured personal organisation (delegation of tasks traditionally assigned to women via the support of a family network or home help) or because of conditions tied to the partner's less profitable work activity (partner unemployed or less qualified and thus holding a less lucrative job).

Thus, with regard to employment, young women managers follow a career pattern comparable to that of men on the condition that they remain single or set up an ad-hoc family structure. The multiplicity of female models relative to the single male model counters the temptation to reduce women to a single profile in order to compare it with a male profile and appreciate the differences. The contrasts that emerge lead us to adopt another point of view. Young managers do not assume the constraints or margins of autonomy characterising their jobs in the same way. The question of time, which functions as a mirror of each person's choice of organisation, is more or less consistent with the criteria for promotion in the professional field concerned. In other words, the choices made in managing time are not neutral with regard to the companies' systems of promotion. From that point on, women who exploit the margin of organisational autonomy available to them in order to respond better to the imperatives of family life limit their possibilities of career advancement by abandoning the "promotional model". Conversely, those who adopt a structure in phase with that model preserve—eight years after their entry into the work force—the same career possibilities as men, on the condition that their employer has gone beyond stereotyped representations of the female model of activity.

Thus, not every woman manager reaps what she has sown. Can we conclude that a development of this model would suffice to promote equality of the sexes, or is it necessary to reconsider more broadly the male-female distribution of social roles?

Thomas Couppié
Dominique Epiphane
Christine Fournier

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Sources and Methodology

This article draws on two kinds of sources: statistics derived from quantitative surveys carried out on broad samples of graduates two to four years after the end of their training and in-depth interviews following a survey of a small sample of higher-education graduates eight years after the end of their training.

The statistical sources on labour-market entry of young graduates come from surveys carried out for the National Observatory on Entries into Working Life (ONEVA). This study uses results from three of those surveys:

- among higher-education graduates from the class of 1988 who were queried in March 1991 (17,400 young people queried, including 8,300 DUT/BTS-holders and 9,100 from graduate schools, engineering schools or business schools);
- among vocational *baccalauréat* holders from the class of 1990 who were queried in October 1992 (3,500 young people queried);
- among CAP and BEP holders from the class of 1989 queried in 1993 (6,000 young people queried).

Each survey recorded the work itinerary over the first thirty-three months following the end of studies (the first twenty-eight months for vocational *baccalauréat* holders).

In the context of a study carried out in collaboration with the French Association of Women University Graduates (AFFDU), we sought to improve our knowledge of the career-building processes and their interaction with the processes of establishing a family. Some forty young people (20 women and 20 men) underwent in-depth interviews eight years after they obtained their diplomas. In order to better identify the effects specific to each gender, we attempted to interview young men and women who were as close as possible in their training (B.A. and graduate-level degree holders in law, economics, computer science, biology, and so forth) and in their professional activity at the outset of their working life (individuals who were employed thirty-three months after their entry onto the labour market and holding a managerial position at that time). This method allowed us to observe potential shifts in career paths during the years that followed these promising beginnings.

briefing

▼ Updates

Higher Education and New Student Itineraries

At a time when a new reform of the French university system is underway, Céreq's journal, Formation Emploi, has published a special issue on higher education that deals with issues such as the structure of training supply, student itineraries and the changing definition of qualification.

In the course of a decade, under the impetus of an active policy of expanded schooling up to the *baccalauréat* level, the percentage of young people with access to higher education has considerably increased. At the same time, students are tending to prolong their studies, as witnessed by the growing demand for admission into training programmes at the bac+5 level or strategies of continued studies after technical higher education such as the DUT or BTS. This double phenomenon has led to a sharp rise in the number of higher education students (1,358,000 in 1985 as compared to 2,139,000 in 1995).

If institutions of higher education have managed to absorb the flow of new students in quantitative terms, the question of their structures and missions remains no less pressing. Universities with just over a million students in 1990 have seen their enrollments increase, even if, in 1995, they accounted for only 58 percent of those continuing their studies beyond the *baccalauréat*. This extension of higher education is accompanied by a rapid rise in

vocational streams and alternance in the university, a diversification of the components of higher education (IUT, STS, Grandes Ecoles and various other institutions, often vocational in nature) and the student bodies. The heterogeneity of students' origins, expectations and behaviours poses one of the major challenges confronting institutions of higher learning.

Labour-market entry (along with the professionalisation of studies) raises another problem. Recruitments are made not only by the public sector—in the broad sense of the term, including the educational system—which corresponds to the historic missions of the university, but also, and increasingly, by the private tertiary sector. This expansion is accompanied by a downgrading of qualifications because of the unfavourable labour-market situation. Nonetheless, all transition surveys agree that a higher-education diploma constitutes an asset against unemployment and plays a decisive role in access to the intermediate or higher occupations. In addition, projections for the coming years seem to confirm a growing need for those with higher-level training.

This special issue of *Formation Emploi* focusses on the way students develop their itineraries, on the basis of their representations of studies and access to employment. Career plans evolve differently from one stream to another, and they change in the course of studies, notably as the encounter with the labour market approaches. Students' view of a successful school-to-work transition is not, however, synonymous with a permanent work contract.

▼ New Editor for Formation Emploi

Christian Le Tiec, editor-in-chief of *Formation Emploi* since 1993, is leaving Céreq for a government aid post in Burkina Faso, where he will help to set up an observatory on school leavers. *Formation Emploi* has benefitted from the high-quality articles he commissioned, and notably at the international level. His successor, Christine Fournier, is a researcher in Céreq's Occupation and Labour Market unit (see the main article in this issue of *Training and Employment*). She will assume her new functions in September.

► "Enseignement supérieur et trajectoires étudiantes"

[Higher Education and Student Itineraries],
Formation Emploi no. 58,
April-June 1997.

Available from
La Documentation française.

▼ New Publications

Le CESI et l'évolution des politiques de formation continue des ingénieurs

[CESI and Changing Policies in Continuing Training for Engineers]

✍ Laurence Coutrot, Françoise Gautier, Paul Kalck and Dominique Maillard

For the last thirty years, the Centre for Higher Industrial Studies (CESI) has been organising full-time two-year training programmes for industrial technicians who want to become engineers. This document analyses the particular position of that training in relation to more recent measures and attempts an interpretative reconstitution of the government's goals concerning the training of engineers.

It also includes a more descriptive section identifying the different players and pedagogical principles at work at the CESI. An analysis of the trainees' social background shows that, in spite of a sharp increase of initial training levels, the population involved generally remains comparable to what it was twenty years ago. The CESI programme is still a marking experience that is recognised by employers and generally validated by favourable social itineraries. CESI's ability to promote social advancement seems to have remained largely intact.

Document no. 123, Evaluation series, March 1997, Céreq.

"Rapports éducatifs, insertion et marchés du travail en Europe. Quelques interrogations."

[Questions on Educational Relations, Integration and Labour Markets in Europe.]

In *Analyse comparative. Problèmes de méthodes* [Comparative Analysis. Methodological Issues]. Paris: Centre national de recherche scientifique (Education and Training in Europe Programme), 1997.

✍ Hervé Lhotel and Etienne Romain

This paper brings out several problems that arise in the comparative analysis of relations between educational systems and labour markets, notably when the chaotic and contradictory process of "European integration" must be taken into account. The authors pursue theoretical and conceptual issues concerning in particular the current meaning of the category *integration* and the frequent failure to include economic relations in the analysis. They also address methodological issues concerning data and statistical indicators produced at the national and international levels.

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Les réformes dans les dispositifs de formation contre l'échec scolaire et social en Europe : le cas de la France

[Reforms in Training Measures to Counter Academic and Social Failure in Europe: The French Case]

✍ Ali Boulayoune, Hervé Lhotel and Vincent Torrese

This report, which is the product of a European collaboration, reviews the main features of the development and transformations of the French educational system and indicates the different interpretations of the notion of academic failure.

SOCRATES programme, Commission of the European Communities, Directorate General XXII, "Education, Training and Youth." Nancy: GREE, 1997. 133 pp.

Les aides publiques à la formation continue dans les entreprises : quelles modalités d'évaluation ?

[Public Aid for Continuing Training in the Companies—How Should It Be Evaluated?]

✍ Eric Verdier and Damien Brochier, eds.

Since 1984, the French government has developed several forms of incentives for encouraging continuing training in the companies. Most of these measures are based on a contract between government and employers. Has this shift towards a "contractual" logic led to a transformation of the evaluation of the government's intervention, which traditionally followed a logic of monitoring and respect of the norms decreed by the 1971 law on continuing vocational training?

This question provides the main orientation of the volume, which draws on a historical approach to situate the current forms of implementing public policy on continuing vocational training in a medium-term perspective. The different contributions present investigations carried out more specifically in the three occupational branches where employers' organisations have signed contracts with the government—metallurgy, plastics technology and mass marketing. For each branch, government intervention is analysed at the national, regional and local (firm) levels. These studies bring out the fact that both private and public players have little awareness of the changes brought about by complex aid measures. In this context, evaluation can serve to clarify their functioning and make known their effects on the firms and the employers' organisations that play an intermediary role. Through an analysis of the functioning of public-aid measures (and particularly the main one, known as vocational training development commitments), this study helps to bring out ways of evaluating these measures that are consistent with their contractual nature.

Document no. 124, Evaluation series, May 1997, Céreq.

▼ In Focus

INCREASED SCHOOLING FOR WOMEN AROUND THE WORLD

Apart from quantitative changes, the sociology of education is confronted with quite a monotonous landscape: inequalities related to social background are always present, and if they are not observed, the reason is basically that the statistic is imprecise or lacking altogether. For the record, a brief period of neoconservatism sufficed to establish that in Poland and Hungary, two formerly socialist countries, the impact of social factors was of the same nature and scope as in the capitalist countries.(1) So much for universal inequalities, and even with undisputed measurements it is quite difficult to establish that the gaps are growing, diminishing, or greater here than there. Against this colourless background, however, one major social change has manifested itself in all the countries of the world: the increase in schooling for women.

French university statistics since the beginning of the century show a unique trend in the growth of women's enrollment, which has maintained a steady rhythm even when overall growth has slowed down or marked time.(2) The rise in the number of men is a phenomenon of the decades following the Second World War. The rise in the number of women is more longstanding and more regular: 9.5 percent annually from 1899 to 1939, 7 percent from 1949 to 1983. From 1990 to 1995, a period marked by a sharp overall increase, female enrollment rose 9 percent annually, as opposed to 6 percent for male enrollment. For the century as a whole, this means that women's enrollment has risen 7.8 percent annually, while the rate for men has only been 3.3 percent. Few social changes occur with such consistency—only the rise of television during the 1960s offers a comparable rate of growth. But because it was spread over an entire century, the increase in women's schooling stimulated fewer commentaries.

This is no longer the case today. The 1995 *World Report on Human Development* titles one of its diagrams "Women have made considerable progress in the area of education." (3) For the period between 1970 and 1990, it shows that:

- without exception, rates of women's schooling in higher education increased;
- male advantages in the Arab countries and South and East Asia decreased;
- women in Latin America and the Caribbean caught up with their male counterparts;
- women took the lead in the OECD countries.

The only areas where men showed greater advances were Subsaharan Africa and Southeast Asia.

This change was generally brought about by growth. Indeed, the level of women's schooling is strongly correlated to the countries' wealth. For 114 countries, the correlation between per capita GDP and young women's access to higher education was 0.69 in 1992 (and only 0.64 for young men). To be sure, correlation is not divine will: all the countries of Latin America have more female students than their GDP would suggest, and conversely, there are rich countries where higher education is relatively sexist, such as Luxembourg, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, Austria, and the UK. Although it did not equal the results of the Scandinavian countries, the US, or Canada, France was also more favourable to young women in 1992 than its GDP would suggest. These cultural or social variations emerge within the overall trend.

Recognition of female competences through certification is a genuine revolution that emphasizes the progress of the world of education, which is often wrongly, and almost always thoughtlessly, condemned for its inertia and backwardness. Compared to the accomplishments confirmed by the school, the world of business(4) and the family, not to mention that of politics, which is masculine to the point of caricature (3), seem like prehistoric structures. But it is nonetheless well known, from the whole of the data on labour-market entry and employment, that in spite of the obstacles lining the path of equality, women are determined to exercise their rights.

Christian Baudelot and Roger Establet

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 4. *Les Cahiers du MAGE* (CNRS GDR no. 1176), 1995-1997. "Temps partiels, salaires inégaux" [Part-time work, unequal wages]. Acts of the European seminar, edited by Margaret Maruani.

▼ **Formation Emploi**

Recent articles in Céreq's quarterly journal, no. 58: April-June 1997

**SPECIAL ISSUE:
HIGHER EDUCATION
AND STUDENT ITINERARIES**



"Universités : Croissance et diversité de l'offre de formation"

[Universities: Growth and Diversity of Training Supply]

✍ Pierre Dubois

In view of the many changes that universities have undergone in recent years, this special issue begins with a review of the institutional, legal, and statistical context of training.

"Universités : Les stratégies de l'offre de formation"

[Universities: Training-Supply Strategies]

✍ Pierre Dubois

Whether by developing subtle compromises within the institution or by presenting rational arguments for outside partners, universities and professors must also increase their productivity in order to diversify their training programmes.

"Les poursuites d'études dans les filières professionnelles de l'enseignement post-secondaire français"

[Continued Study in the Vocational Streams of French Post-Secondary Education]

✍ Eric Cahuzac and Jean-Michel Plassard

In a context of diminishing job opportunities, complex individual behaviours combine to increase the frequency of continued study—even in the "vocational" university streams. This phenomenon is obviously more common after a higher technician certificate (BTS) or university technology diploma (DUT) than after business or engineering school.

"La construction des projets à l'université : Le cas de quatre filières de l'université de masse"

[Developing Career Plans at University: The Case of Four Broad-Based University Streams]

✍ Georges Felouzis and Nicolas Sembel

In this survey of students in geography, physics, modern literature, and law departments, the authors observe the effects that are particular to each stream, notably the absence of career goals seen as an advantage and a vision of the future that is increasingly undefined as studies progress.

"Les représentations de l'insertion professionnelle chez les diplômés de l'université"

[Representations of the Transition to Working Life Among University Graduates]

✍ Claude Trottier, Louise Laforce and Renée Cloutier

This survey, carried out in Quebec, argues that the study of the transition to working life must consider the individual's representations of it. These obviously include job stability, but also the training-employment relation and the building of a professional identity.

"Famille, petites annonces, ANPE... L'accès à l'emploi des diplômés de l'enseignement supérieur"

[The Family, the Classifieds, the Job Centre—Access to Employment Among Higher-Education Graduates]

✍ Dominique Ephiaphane and Daniel Martinelli

The effects of diplomas, gender, and social origin on job entry are known. But the quality of the jobs held by recent graduates is also correlated to the means used to obtain them.

"Première expérience professionnelle avant le diplôme : Quelle insertion pour les étudiants de second cycle universitaire ?"

[First Work Experience Before Graduation: What Options for Upper-Division University Students?]

✍ Catherine Béduwé and Eric Cahuzac

More than one-third of university students work during their studies, and these are not only bread-and-butter jobs. "Working during university increases the chances of immediate and lasting access to permanent job contracts and sharply decreases the risk of future unemployment." An argument that has considerable weight today.

BOOKSTORES

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