

# Training & Employment

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM CEREQ AND ITS ASSOCIATED CENTRES

## RECRUITING MIDDLE MANAGEMENT IN INDUSTRY

### What Kinds of Change in France, Germany and the United Kingdom?

*Major British, French and German industrial companies are increasingly recruiting higher-education graduates for their middle-management posts, traditionally filled through the promotion of operatives. This new form of recruitment does not take place on the same scale or at the same rate in all the companies utilising it, however, and it is, in particular, closely tied to the different national contexts. Its implications for employee training and careers also raise questions. Should this form of recruiting new middle managers become widespread, it may well limit attempts to encourage the choice of short vocational training streams among students and the development of life-long learning.*

In France, Germany and the United Kingdom, the middle management of industrial production is assumed by the *agent de maîtrise*, the *Meister* or the supervisor, who traditionally come from the ranks of the workers. Today, however, the major industrial companies are increasingly entrusting this function to graduates of short or long higher-education programmes. The analysis of this new way of recruiting middle managers sheds light on the impact of individual educational choices, be they independent or imposed, as well as on questions which are more specific to each country: What trajectories can be anticipated for graduates of vocational and technical streams in France? What are the prospects for the industrial *Meister* in Germany?

Several case studies (cf. Box p. 3) suggest that the conditions behind the recourse to higher-education graduates for middle management of production are relatively similar in the major French, British or German industrial companies. Nonetheless, the forms and dynamics of their policies are varied and must be considered in their national contexts.

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## POINTS IN COMMON

In the majority of cases observed, changes in the forms of access to middle-management posts arise in a context of company reorganisation, which has repercussions either directly on the function or the jobs filled by middle managers or on the potential breeding ground constituted by the operative category. Similar trends, such as the overhaul of work teams or groups, the increased formalisation of work procedures or the emphasis placed on environmental, quality and safety norms, impose new constraints on middle managers.

The large companies surveyed enjoy a favourable situation in the labour market within their geographic area. The higher-education graduates they recruit have not only been trained in large numbers but faced declining conditions of labour-market entry during the first half of the 1990s. And such recruitments are further facilitated by the fact that the companies maintain close ties with the educational institutions.

CENTRE D'ÉTUDES ET DE RECHERCHES SUR LES QUALIFICATIONS

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It is also clear that these large companies are pursuing several common goals through the new recruitment policies for middle managers. Their personnel management heads all use the same argument to justify their recourse to higher-education graduates, based in large part on the competences associated with the role they intend to assign to their middle managers. New titles such as team coach or team leader, like *chef de module*, *chef d'ilot* or *chef de secteur* in French, are intended to reflect this change, which emphasises three new aspects of the function: having more formalised competences, using another style of supervision and drawing on new interpersonal or even commercial skills. For personnel officers, such requirements imply raising the level of middle managers while lowering their ages. But the new career management rules applied by the companies also call into question the link between access to a middle-management post and the promotion of operatives. Case-by-case procedures, based on past tradition and proximity between supervisors and supervised, are being replaced by technical tools for the assessment of competences and forward-looking labour-market and career management, which are aimed at making the career path within the company more 'objective'.

These new policies also reflect the companies' desire for more rigorous management of their wage bill; they not only permit short-term economies by recruiting younger people into middle-manager positions but in several instances they lead to a downgrading of the posts occupied by the higher-education graduates in the chain of authority.

### VERY DIVERSE SITUATIONS

Beyond these similarities, the forms and stakes of the transformation of middle management, from the nature of its role to the kind of training involved, are far from identical. The extent of this trend depends in part on fluctuations in the number of company personnel. In this respect, the British companies' rate of turnover and recourse to temporary employment greatly exceed what is observed elsewhere. They thus illustrate the phenomena of destabilisation of the previously dominant wage relationship and rapid breakdown of industrialisation observed in the United Kingdom, where growing labour-force 'flexibility' is combined with the transfer of certain activities toward the tertiary sector. In French and especially German companies, the new policies for replenishing middle manager ranks are also most often undertaken at the time of major reorganisations of workforce structure, but in various forms: measures accompanying economic layoffs, relocation or creation of units, installation of new activities.

Changes in the organisation of production also arise differently from one company to another. Furthermore, the very marked differences in the origins, nature and degree of these changes are not the same as those that may be observed in the forms of recruiting higher-education graduates for middle-management posts. Such observations illustrate the difficulty of establishing a direct link between the new recruitment policies and organisational changes,

other than the fact that these policies tend to anticipate the reinforcing role that the higher-education graduates can play in such a context.

The new means of access to middle-management posts are themselves quite varied, even within a single company. They range from the case (quite exceptional) of the direct hiring of beginners with higher-education diplomas to the internal or external recruitment of experienced graduates, via the hiring of recent graduates invited to become middle managers after an orientation programme specially designed to this end or a post in production. These different cases clearly show that the recourse to higher-education graduates for middle management cannot be reduced to a simple opposition between recruitment and internal promotion or between beginners and experienced employees. They also show that what is being called into question is not necessarily the competences of traditional middle managers but also their place in the company's chain of authority.

Beyond its standard definition, middle management occupies very varied roles, which adds to the difficulty of analysing modes of recruitment. A good indicator of this diversity lies in the rates of team supervision or in other words, the ratio between middle managers and operatives (even if this rate is sometimes difficult to measure, especially in the British case where the lines between permanent and temporary are increasingly blurred). The rate of supervision in fact varies considerably from one company, sector or country to another. Thus, in the French companies, the number of levels in the chain of authority is higher than elsewhere, and the new forms of replacing middle managers may also involve lower and middle command posts such as head operator or team leader. In comparison, the German *Meister*, past and present, has responsibilities that are at once broader and more defined. As a result, when the means of access to this function change, they become a particularly important issue in terms of career management. In the British and French companies, where the boundaries of the middle managers' power are less clear, the split between old and new policies is not as pronounced. These companies are also more apt to maintain several forms of access to middle-management posts, but these differ in each country.

### THREE COUNTRIES, THREE TRENDS

The scope and pace of the transformations observed may be explained in large part by the countries where the companies operate. Indeed, they reflect the specific modes and dynamics of production and recognition of qualifications in each country.

If the traditional access to middle-management posts is based on the promotion of operatives in all three countries, it does not follow the same mechanisms. In Germany, the middle manager category corresponds to a specific qualification which is defined outside the company: the certified *Meister*. The certificate in question is acquired through continuing training after apprenticeship, most often

at the initiative of the individual concerned but without any guarantee of occupying the corresponding position. Given the number of *Meisters* trained, the recourse to higher-education graduates, should it become widespread, could only be justified by calling this category, its training and its career path into question. In the British and French companies, the traditional middle manager category is not distinguished from that of operative in terms of diplomas. But this does not mean that the individual has not acquired additional qualifications. The companies, often with the help of their trade associations, develop continuing training programmes that are sometimes quite elaborate, although there is no title comparable to that of *Meister* in these two countries. In France, however, the process of raising the training level of operatives, which has been underway since the mid 1980s with the creation of the vocational *baccalauréat*, should provide industry with a sufficient pool of qualifications to supply the middle manager category—even if many companies have not yet been able to create such a reserve for themselves because they have not recruited sufficient numbers of young people in recent years. In the United Kingdom, on the other hand, the collapse of the fundamentals of worker qualifications, largely related to the decline of apprenticeship in recent decades, has contributed to the creation of a binary structure which does not encourage the development of intermediate qualifications capable of taking over.

Similarly, if there has been an increase in the number of higher-education graduates in all three countries, their labour-market entry does not follow the same rules. Several marked features emerging from the case studies are worth citing. In the British companies, the recruitment of graduates is not limited to middle or upper management posts but may also involve operator posts. For their part, the French companies privilege the hiring of higher technicians holding a corresponding vocational training certificate (*brevet de technicien supérieur*, BTS) or polytechnic diploma (*diplôme universitaire de technologie*, DUT). This kind of recruitment has become standard practice in maintenance units and is spreading in manufacturing, where the managerial function is only entrusted to the young higher technicians after a period of in-company experience, which may extend over several years in order to attain the top positions (first-line supervisor, unit leader). The German companies, meanwhile, are turning to engineers, generally coming from the short higher training stream (*Fachhochschule*), who may be beginners or selected among in-house managers, but in this case the post they are called upon to fill is modified.

This study of companies implementing a new method for replenishing their middle managers (cf. Box below) was not intended to determine the extent of the recourse to higher-education graduates in the three countries. If we

### New Career Pathways and Life-Long Learning The Case of Middle Managers in Industrial Production

The results presented in this article are taken from a comparative study jointly funded by the European Commission's "Education and Culture" Directorate General (DGXXII) through the Leonardo da Vinci programme. The study is based on the observation of changes in the means of filling middle-management posts in industry, which are similar in France, Germany and the United Kingdom. The 'middle manager' category is taken to include employees responsible for supervising and directing the work of teams in industrial production units. In the companies' chains of authority, this function is situated between the posts of managers in charge of these units and the so-called operational jobs.

The study raises several questions: What is the future of worker careers? What consequences will the changes observed have on choices of initial and continuing training streams? What solutions may be envisioned to help revitalise advancement through promotion?

For each country, two kinds of data were used:

- on the one hand, an inventory carried out on the basis of existing literature and available statistics (national assessments);

- on the other, an in-depth survey carried out in three major companies in the chemical and mechanical construction industries previously identified as having had recourse to higher-education graduates to fill their middle-manager posts.

The totality of these data was subsequently the subject of a comparative review.

This study, entitled "New career pathways and life-long learning, the case of middle management in industrial production (CALL)", was directed by Ingrid Drexel (Institut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung, Munich) in partnership with Martine Möbus (Céreq), Frédéric Gérardin, Benoît Grasser and Hervé Lhotel (Groupe de recherche sur l'éducation et l'emploi, Céreq's associated regional centre in Nancy) and Alan Brown and Malcolm Maguire (Institute for Employment Research, Warwick). A report on this study was submitted to the European Commission in September 2000: *Neue Karrierewege und lebenslanges Lernen: das Beispiel der Führungskräfte der industriellen Produktion (CALL)*. Céreq will publish the results in French in 2001.

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consider the available statistics, the proportion of middle-manager posts in industry held by higher-education graduates is very limited in Germany: 2 to 4 percent. It is low in France, although on the increase: 12 percent in 1997 as compared to 4 percent in 1982. (There are no equivalent data for the UK.) The company cases analysed, once they are placed in their respective contexts, nonetheless allows us to identify marked trends or, conversely, marginal situations.

Thus, the British context seems the most favourable to the recourse to higher-education graduates. There is rapid replenishment of the companies' personnel because of the extent of external flexibility (high turnover and precarious forms of employment); the supply of skilled workers is declining while the number of young people exiting higher education has sharply increased, and the forms of negotiated regulation of the training-employment relationship have lost ground or disappeared altogether.

The German situation, by contrast, tends to limit massive recourse to higher-education graduates. There is a specific qualification corresponding to middle-manager posts (the *Meister* certificate) and an adequate supply of trained individuals in this category. The increase in the number of higher-education graduates remains relatively limited and the number of engineering graduates has even shown a sharp decrease in recent years, while access to employment on the basis of negotiated agreements has been maintained.

The French situation, meanwhile, privileges a mixed form of replenishing middle managers which depends on both internal promotion and the recruitment of higher-education graduates. The middle manager category is quite

heterogeneous and the recourse to BTS- or DUT-holders relatively longstanding. This category of diplomas, which does not have an equivalent in the other two countries, formally corresponds to the supervisory level of qualification on many indexation grids. The supply of graduates has increased rapidly but the recruitment of beginners remains limited. And the career prospects for operatives are relatively more numerous because of the greater share of intermediate jobs in the companies' chains of authority.

If the co-existence of promoted employees and higher-education graduates within the French companies' middle manager ranks seems viable, the mechanisms of selection and competition between these two categories nonetheless works against the promotional path. For one thing, the decline in the recruitment of young people, in both absolute and relative terms, over the past fifteen years has not permitted the companies to build up a sufficient reserve to handle the immediate supervisor functions. The recent resumption of recruitments should give them the opportunity to do so by bringing in greater numbers of young people. For another, the French continuing vocational training system, which has no equivalent elsewhere in Europe, has not yet had more than a slight impact on the resumption of studies and the acquisition of occupational certifications. In this respect, the new tools for the accreditation of work experience may help to revitalise access to middle manager positions through promotion while increasing opportunities for external mobility.

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FRENCH RESEARCH CENTRE FOR THE ANALYSIS OF OCCUPATIONS, VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Céreq

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## Updates

### “Decentralisation and Vocational Training Policy”: Céreq-Conicet Seminar in Buenos Aires

Since 1992, an agreement between Céreq and the Conseil national de la recherche scientifique et technique (National Council for Scientific and Technical Research, Conicet) has encouraged exchanges of information and research in the area of training, employment and vocational qualifications. Among the resulting activities is an annual seminar organised in Argentina by the Programme de recherche économique sur la technologie, le travail et l'emploi (Programme for economic research on technology, work and employment, Piette), under the direction of Dr Julio Neffa, professor of economics at La Plata University and researcher at France's national research centre (CNRS). Each year, a Céreq researcher presents a survey of current work on the seminar topic selected; for the year 2000, the issue of the decentralisation of vocational training policies was chosen in light of its topicality in Argentina. The seminar, led by Antoine Richard, drew on studies and analyses carried out over the past decade on the relatively recent process of French-style decentralisation (begun in 1982).

The three-day seminar was devoted to the following three themes:

- *Historical background of the local and regional dimension of vocational training.*

An overview of the history of vocational training since the

nineteenth century (cf. *Formation Emploi* no. 27-28, July-December 1989) placed the question of decentralisation and devolution in its societal context. In this light, the very 'academic' and centralised nature of initial vocational training in France might be termed (to borrow Vincent Troger's expression), a parenthesis in a century of vocational training.<sup>1</sup> From its local origins heavily marked by the relationship between business and local government, vocational training was 'abandoned' to the State during the 1940-1980 period but once again seems to be assuming its place within a necessary relationship to the regions. Indeed, the recent history of government action in the area of vocational training may be compared to that of economic planning and regional development which, since the 1960s, have successively made the region a relay for and a representative of the State's action.

- *The transformation of relations between State and regions in the carrying out of education and training policies.* With decentralisation, the question of the emergence and identification of the new actors on the one hand and the analysis of the functioning of systems of actors and co-ordination of public measures in the regions on the other have led to analysis of the notion of 'governance' and partnership as new forms of intervention by the public authorities.

- *The difficult emergence of economic and social actors at regional and local level.* Various evaluations of regional vocational training policies carried out by Céreq between 1994 and 1999 have brought out the weakness and diversity of company participation in the development of regional and local vocational training policies. The analysis focused on the tension between a short-term 'matching' approach to the training-employment relationship, making training a variable for adjusting the labour market to the individual company's needs, and a more prospective elaboration of skilling plans giving the regions assets for their middle-term development.

In the course of the seminar meetings, but also talks and contacts with those in charge of public action, it became clear that the question of decentralisation of employment and training policies in Argentina is closely tied to the economic and financial problems of the federal government. With the government's transfer of authority—and the costs related to it—to the provinces in the area of social policies, the question of equal access to education and qualification, as in France, becomes an issue.

✓ *Contact:* Antoine Richard, Céreq

1. Guy Bruzy and Vincent Troger, "Un siècle de formation professionnelle en France : la parenthèse scolaire", *Revue française de pédagogie* no. 131 (April-May-June 2000).

## New Publications

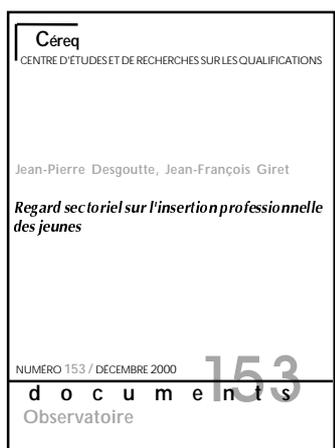
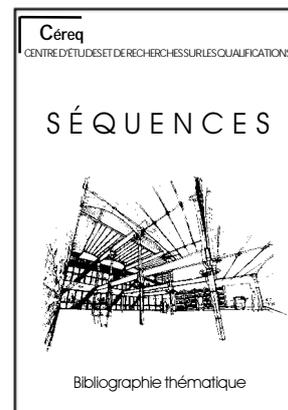
### Les emplois jeunes–Bibliographie thématique

[Youth Jobs–Thematic Bibliography]

✍ Marie Baudry de Vaux

This bibliography compiled by Céreq's Documentation Centre offers a selection of more than sixty publications (periodical articles, books, reports and other documents) issued since the creation of the "Nouveaux services, Emplois jeunes" (New Services, Youth Jobs) programme in November 1997. Reflecting the main references on the subject to date, the bibliography is divided into nine themes: programme description, statistical assessment and programme evaluation, legal framework and work contract, sectors involved, training and accreditation of work experience, innovative aspects of the scheme, professionalisation, permanence and flexibility, labour-market entry.

**Séquences**, special issue, November 2000. 38 pp. 100 francs (15.24 €).



### Regard sectoriel sur l'insertion professionnelle des jeunes

[A Sectoral Approach to the School-to-Work Transition]

✍ Jean-Pierre Desgoutte and Jean-François Giret

This document presents a series of indicators from the "92 Generation" survey which were developed from a sectoral entry. It attempts to describe how an entire generation exiting school integrates the different economic activity sectors.

The analysis of sectoral recruitments by training levels, specialisations and streams brings out the preferences of the different sectors. While some show a very concentrated recruitment structure which is limited to two or three training programmes (hairdresser-beautician, R&D), others draw on young people with extremely varied training (transportation, food-processing industries). The document also offers an overview of sectoral forms of youth labour-force management, which show large differences, among others, in their turnover rates or their recourse to part-time or temporary work or continuing training.

The longitudinal nature of the data also permits an understanding of mobility strategies among beginners during their first five years of working life. If certain sectors hire them in large numbers, they do not necessarily hold on to them, while others recruit fewer numbers but hold on to them. Nearly one out of every ten young people from the '92 generation, for example, worked in the hotel and catering industry between 1992 and 1997, but fewer than one out of three was still in this sector in 1997.

**Document** no. 153, Céreq, December 2000. 197 pp., 170 francs (25.92 €).



*These documents are available at Céreq's bookstore or by written request to Marie-Christine Antonucci, Céreq, 10, place de la Joliette, BP 21321, 13567 Marseille cedex 2. Tel. 33 4 91 13 28 89, fax 33 4 91 13 28 80. E-mail: [antonucci@cereq.fr](mailto:antonucci@cereq.fr). Please add 25 F (3.81 €) for postage and handling.*



### Céreq's 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Programme

Several events organised at Céreq headquarters in Marseilles last May marked the beginning of Céreq's thirtieth-anniversary celebrations.

#### “Old and New Approaches to Labour-Market Entry”

A day-long seminar held on 16 May focused on the results of Céreq's '92 Generation survey which analyses the first five years of active life of young people exiting the French school system in 1992 at all levels and in all curricula. Three main themes were addressed:

- “Groups of young people and categories of paths”, which examined the link between the economic situation and the youth transition, the diversity of trajectories in the market and the risk of exclusion, gender differences and labour-market entry following technical higher education.
- “Contexts of transition”, which featured presentations on sector-based disparities in workforce management and labour-market entry, the role of certain sectors, such as the public service or the food-processing industries, in the itineraries of recent entrants and the impact of the regional context (the example of Normandy).
- “Mobility, career and socio-occupational affiliation”, which dealt with the outlets for the hotel and catering stream, training at the beginning of working life and entry into the managerial category.

This seminar also considered twenty-five years of observation of the youth transition through an analysis of the evolution of the National Observatory on Entries into Working Life (ONEVA) and a review of the surveys and their impact.

✓ The papers from this seminar are available (in French) on Céreq's Website [www.cereq.fr](http://www.cereq.fr). Click on **30 ans**, followed by **Agenda**.

#### “The Construction and Use of Analytical Categories”

(Eighth conference on longitudinal data in the analysis of the labour market, organised in collaboration with the Laboratory for Secondary Analysis and Methods Applied to Sociology-Longitudinal Institute, LASMAS-IdL)

This two-day conference, held on 17-18 May, included more than twenty presentations organised in seven sessions:

- The imprint of the institutional context
- Work and employment: (de)construction and use of classifications
- Definition and relevance of analytical categories
- Identifying training
- Description of paths, categories of trajectories
- Trajectories of categories
- Facts and words: the analysis of discourse as an aid in classification.

✓ The papers from this conference are available on Céreq's Website [www.cereq.fr](http://www.cereq.fr). Click on **30 ans**, followed by **Agenda**.

## Formation Emploi

Recent articles in Céreq's quarterly journal, no. 73, January-March 2001

SPECIAL SECTION: '92 GENERATION

### Génération 92 : un regard renouvelé sur les parcours de débutants ?

[‘92 Generation: A New Approach to Beginners’ Itineraries?]

✍ Michèle Mansuy

### Le travail en cours d'études a-t-il un effet sur l'insertion professionnelle ? Application aux données de l'enquête «Génération 92»

[Do Student Jobs Have an Effect on Labour-Market Entry? Application to the Data from the "Generation '92" Survey]

✍ Catherine Béduwé and Jean-François Giret

Work during schooling offers several advantages at the time of the school-to-work transition, in the form of additional competence, positive signals for future employers or motivation to work. Céreq's survey of young people completing their initial training in 1992 shows that this first work experience, acquired before the end of schooling, influences the labour-market entry of young people regardless of their qualification level.

### Les effets de la formation continue en entreprise sur la mobilité et le salaire des jeunes

[The Effects of In-Company Continuing Training on Young People's Mobility and Wages]

✍ Arnaud Dupray and Saïd Hanchane

Few studies of in-company continuing training have considered the first years of working life as a specific period. The analysis of Céreq's '92 Generation survey fills this gap. The authors bring out the importance of continuing training for young people and the more beneficial nature of its effects compared to the training offered to older candidates. Mobility is affected less by the objectives of the training *per se* than by its consequences, in terms of a change in activity or increase in wages and responsibilities, which in fact result in reduced mobility after training. And training acquired in a previous job, when it is certified, has greater recognition in terms of wages than that provided in the job held at the time of the survey.

### Insertion professionnelle et vie sociale des jeunes en Haute-Normandie

[School-to-Work Transition and the Social Life of Young People in the Haute-Normandie Region]

✍ Alain Degenne and Marie-Odile Lebeau

The authors analyse the phase of initial contact with the labour market on the basis of Céreq's '92 Generation survey plus a complementary survey on the subjects' personal lives carried out in the Haute-Normandie region. These two surveys, conducted in 1999, bear on a sample of 1,534 young people exiting the school system in 1992. Céreq's survey confirms the combined effects of gender and educational level on the speed and effectiveness of the school-to-work transition. It brings out the growing proportion of jobs with unstable—and notably temporary—status, even for young people enjoying rapid labour-market entry. Typologies of the different trajectories are constructed and then related to periodic information gathered on living conditions, social and leisure-time activities, family environment and health, as well as the young peoples' perception of the working world and their plans for the future.

### Analyser les mouvements d'accès et de retrait de l'emploi au cours de la période d'insertion professionnelle

[Analysing the Movements In and Out of Employment During the School-to-Work Transition]

✍ Henri Eckert

This analysis of movements in and out of employment during the transition period is based on the calculation of three longitudinal indicators. If they allow the process of labour-market entry to be described in terms of its own dynamics, they also provide endogenous criteria for evaluating

the labour-market entry of one cohort or its sub-groups on the basis of a feature common to a large number of individuals.

### A propos de l'article de Henri Eckert : l'approche macrosociale de l'insertion professionnelle

[Comments on Henri Eckert's Article: The Macrosocial Approach to Labour-Market Entry]

✍ Jean Vincens, professor emeritus of economics, Université de Toulouse I.

### L'insertion professionnelle en France : les apports d'une comparaison internationale

[Labour-Market Entry in France: The Contributions of International Comparison]

Interview with Paul Ryan, professor of economics at King's College, Cambridge, and specialist on youth employment.

### Usage de l'expérience professionnelle et performance productive

[The Use of Work Experience and Performance in Production]

✍ Benoît Grasser and José Rose

Experience is central to the dynamics of the training-employment relationship but it is not often studied *per se*. The issue addressed here is its role in achieving high performance in production. After examining the way the contribution of experience to such performance is treated in the economic literature, the authors approach the same issue empirically through a study of the banking and mass retailing sectors. Beyond the confirmation of the link between experience and performance, this research brings out its complexity and diversity, as well as its interrelationship with the company's management and organisation choices and institutional forms proper to each activity sector.

### Book Notes

P. Rozenblatt (ed.), *Le mirage de la compétence* (Editions Syllepse, 2000)

✍ Laurence Coutrot, CNRS researcher specialised in social and occupational mobility.

This issue may be ordered from La Documentation française, 124, rue Henri-Barbusse, 93308 Aubervilliers cedex, tel. 33 (0)1 40 15 70 00, fax 33 (0)1 40 15 68 00. Issue price: 82,65 FF (12.60 €). One-year subscription (4 issues): 309,30 FF (47 €) for France, 327,98 F (50 €) for Europe, 337,82 FF (51.50 €) for the French overseas departments and territories.