

# Let's prepare the change of governance of the National Education system towards 2022

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**The French education system is one of the OECD countries where the performance of 15-year-old students is most correlated with their social background. Socialists cannot accept this state of affairs.**

Yet the people in contact with the students are remarkably involved. Almost all the members of the educational team do their best within the framework of action to which they are entitled, within the system of representation of the causes of the difficulties which is theirs, to help the young people to progress. Their responsiveness during the VIDOC containment episode has shown us this again.

## **I - Diagnosis of the school: inappropriate governance and lack of awareness of the issues on the part of the general public**

Our school's difficulty in helping students whose parents do not have the codes of society or those who have specific learning difficulties is related to several factors:

- The governance of National Education is inadequate because it operates by injunctions, too numerous to be taken into account, often contradictory and decided by people with little knowledge of the realities of the teacher. However, in situations where professionals have to adapt to each situation, efficiency is obtained through highly delegated management systems, based on the support of people who act closest to the field and mutual aid between peers. In the case of the school, this support comes through a correct salary and a management behaviour that allows the teacher to never lose face in front of the students. This is not the case today.
- The classes in the Base School are too crowded for heterogeneous classes. Successful countries have a maximum of 20 pupils in CP-CE1 classes (where reading and numeracy automatisms must be implemented) and a maximum of 24 pupils up to the equivalent of 9<sup>th</sup> grade, as well as excess teachers.
- The general public's knowledge of school issues is low and often built on the artificial polemics that we see in the media.

However, UNESCO's Education Commission advocates a model of lifelong learning, where everyone should have access to the learning necessary for their integration into human society and their fulfillment. The current working group of this commission has been instructed to focus on "rethinking the role of education, learning and knowledge in the light of the major challenges and opportunities for anticipated, possible and preferred futures. UNESCO advocates **the provision of** basic knowledge for all. If they have not been acquired at the time of initial training, the means must be put in place so that they can be acquired later. Today, the children who do not have the automatic reading and numbering systems in CE2 are generally not accompanied, due to a lack of specific means and the priority given to the realization of the program. The commission recommends a reflection to define the skills needed to manage the changes related to the major challenges. The last reforms of the general high school were justified by a denigration of the sciences voluntarily constructed. Indeed, the level reached in "literary

expression" and "mathematics" is structuring to allow the success of certain studies.

superior in all countries of the world. There was a denial that the elimination of the lowest 60% of the cohort in literary subjects was done before, a denial of the functional need for multiple levels in mathematics (which open and close doors exactly like the level in literary expression) and a denial of the need to learn the rigor of a demonstration for those who choose the scientific path. The great law for the refoundation of the 2013 school, carried by the left, is in phase, for the period école du socle (elementary school + college), on the recommendations of the UNESCO Education Commission.

## **II - Diagnosing the failure of the reforms: The power game has been blocking for nearly 30 years**

The inability to implement effective reforms is due to a power play between four acting interest groups (or systems of actors in sociology) :

- The "technostructure of National Education" which has been anchored in a bureaucracy for decades and has recently adopted the harmful governance by numbers ;
- The "self-proclaimed-progressive" in favor of reforms and innovative pedagogies, but incapable of verifying their impact on those furthest from school and on young people whose families do not have the codes of society;
- The "paradoxical elitists" who want to continue to teach a course in middle school for the top third of the class, and deny that this consists in abandoning and destroying the self-confidence of the academically weakest;
- The "assumed elitists" who are in favour of early screening of students and disinterest the future of young people who are not comfortable with school.

Over the past thirty years, too many reforms have been made, driven by a Minister's decision to communicate, negotiated to be acceptable to the four interest groups and to be marketable as beneficial to the general public. The voices of those furthest from school, of students discriminated against for systemic reasons (stereotypes) and of those who felt the need to transmit a rigorous scientific approach, were not heard or sometimes deliberately not listened to.

However, there are global visions of what is at stake in Education and the areas where action should be taken that can serve as a basis for a new governance of the "Education System". The one described here was published in 2017 in the proceedings of a symposium of a learned society specializing in systems science. An application to social and gender determinisms followed in 2018.

## **III - A model that can serve as a basis for action for new governance.**

Systems science can provide a model of the education system, useful for changing governance.

The education system used goes from the birth of a person to the end of the professional career. It includes everything that goes into education, including interactions with society and popular education. National Education is a link in this.

### **This model has 5 issues and 5 fields of action.**

The stakes are ends which are not naturally taken into account and which must therefore be addressed through governance and specific means.

- **Issue 1 "Fundamentals"** - That all young adults living in France have the fundamentals that enable them to understand how society works, to communicate with the people who make it up and to participate in it.
- **Issue 2 "Keys to understanding the world"** - That as many people as possible, regardless of their social background, have the keys to developing a personal understanding of scientific, cultural and societal issues, and that they have the ability to be wary of simplistic slogans on issues vital to the country's stability.
- **Issue 3 "Training-to-Employment Consistency"** - That there be consistency between the number of people trained in a skill and employment opportunities.
- **Issue 4 "The country's capacity to innovate and adapt to change"** That the country has the technicians, technicians, engineers and scientists needed to manage the unprecedented changes caused by global warming and the need to preserve the planet.
- **Issue 5 "Equal Opportunity"** - That biases in the education system be compensated for that opportunities for education and the attainment of positions of responsibility in society are independent of social origin, gender or place of residence.

The template provides **5 action fields** that can be supported separately. Each field is the subject of separate governance attention although they influence each other.

- **Field 1 "Interactions with the environment".**

A lot of learning is done by imitation or by interaction with one's environment. A young human naturally learns to walk, talk and manage social interactions. He or she unconsciously constructs representations of the world of young people and adults based on what he or she witnesses. Not everyone is on equal footing with what they learn. Representations of people in the media tend to reproduce stereotypical roles in society, which influences young people's view of themselves. Civil society must act on what creates inequalities in knowledge of the world, orientation and educational pathways. School must help to compensate for what influences the destiny of young people.

- **Field 2 = The school of the Base or fundamentals**

It is the pivot of an educational system: the school where an entire age group is together before accessing a diversity of paths. This period starts at 6-7 years old when the child's brain is mature for learning automatic reading with sense construction and ends between 12 and 16 years old depending on the country. In France, this period includes elementary school and middle school. It is the core of the National Education system. The challenges are prodigious. According to the law of 2013, "*[Compulsory schooling] provides students with a common culture, based on essential knowledge and skills, which will enable them to develop personally, to develop their social skills, to succeed in the rest of their education, to fit into the society where they will live and to participate, as citizens, in its evolution.* »

- **Field 3 = Preparation for learning in the Base School**

What happens before entering CP and learning to read and count.

- **Field 4 = The training offer for personal development and insertion professional**

This period is seen as a continuum from the end of ninth grade to retirement. To allow for equality in orientation, the consequences of the choice of options or specialties must be legible. It is not conceivable that the choice at the age of 15 will be a life-long commitment, so bridges to change orientation must be provided, as well as support to make up for any structural deficiencies.

The rules of assignment in training courses with a limited number of staff must be designed to limit the reproduction of society's inequalities. The offer of vocational training (to prepare for a profession) must be as far as possible compatible with accessible job offers (except in the case of highly specialized training).

- **Field 5 = Orientation and accompaniment towards a life choice**

Information on orientation has been entrusted to the regions, support in making life choices must remain in the domain of the school. Representing oneself in the adult world is a cognitive path that is built over time. In order to limit inequalities of destiny, young people who might feel like conforming to the stereotypes linked to their social class or gender must be given the desire to aim high.

**IV - Change through progressive reform**

It is possible, when stakeholders agree on the issues, to implement incremental changes. Especially since not everything depends on the school. The fight against stereotyped roles in the media is everyone's business. Information at orientation depends on regions. Popular education is everyone's business.

Teachers are exhausted by the successive reforms, as well as by the close program changes. Reducing the size of classes in the Base School cannot be done without hiring new teachers who will need to be trained and building new buildings to provide more classrooms. This will not happen overnight.

The first task will have to be the human management of the people who are in contact with our children. The approaches to do this exist: it is a question of will. We must undertake a real change in governance that puts the teacher at the center of the knowledge transmission system.

University and research funding will need to be reviewed. Researchers need to spend more time doing research than filling out funding applications. Discoveries in basic research are made over a long period of time.

The training offer for personal development and professional integration is the most complex subject. The reform of the Lycée Général de Blanquer reinforces gender bias in education and does not promote scientific knowledge in the French population. The reform of the vocational high school has led to a decrease in general education, which is very detrimental to young people, half of whom are weak in their French language skills. Today, apprenticeship is favored at the expense of vocational high schools. However, we know that social backgrounds influence the ability to find an internship and that 28% of contracts are broken and the young person's schooling is questioned.

It is not possible to leave the high schools in state. However, this should not lead to yet another change of programs. The balance between vocational high school and apprenticeship will have to be rethought, as well as the compulsory part of general education in the vocational streams.

However, the consensus between pressure groups, forgetting some of the issues of the school and the real needs of children with learning difficulties, should no longer be the way to change the school.

For example, for the post-college part, it is possible to rigorously analyze the constraints and needs for orientation support and training offers for the sequence Bac-3 to Bac+3 :

- for young people who do not have the knowledge acquired at the Base school and are in a phase of loss of self-confidence,
- for young people who have the basis to succeed in most training courses provided that they or they make the necessary efforts,
- for young people who have the skills or potential to succeed in the most selective training in a given field.

*The Socialist Party must take up the task of a governance of the Education System that goes beyond the school and launch reflections and communications on the five issues and the five fields of action, involving the people concerned.*