The rationality of judgement: comparative perspectives on the social role of educational assessment

Thesis

How to cite:


For guidance on citations see FAQs.

© 1984 The Author

Version: Version of Record
PART II : TWO CASE STUDIES : FRANCE AND ENGLAND
CHAPTER FIVE

ASSESSMENT IN THE FRENCH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

Introduction

Up to this point, the analyses of this thesis have been concerned with identifying the significance of assessment as an aspect of mass schooling and the different forms such assessment may take within any one education system. After the general theoretical analyses of Chapters One to Three, Chapter Four explored the more specific theoretical issues which arise in a consideration of how these constant features of educational systems in modern industrial societies are mediated through the substantive reality of any particular national context. Here it was suggested that the idiosyncratic blend of ideological and institutional traditions and contemporary social, economic and political pressures which determine the nature of educational provision in any one country, will be reflected in the form that assessment procedures take but not in their essential importance which is rooted in the characteristic ideology and resultant institutional structures of industrial society itself.

In this chapter and the next, these theoretical arguments are explored by means of a detailed comparative study of two national education systems - those of France and England. These two countries were chosen, as suggested in the introduction, because of their relative similarity in terms of national characteristics such as socio-economic development, size, geographical and historical context, ethnic mix and political traditions. That is to say, they share many common features as advanced industrial societies. On the other hand, they differ markedly in terms of several key aspects of their respective educational arrangements and traditions,
notably that of the degree of overt central government of education, differences which it was anticipated would help to illuminate the significance of assessment in educational provision. There is no suggestion that the empirical descriptions which follow are in any way definitive. Apart from the impossibility of such a project the aim here is rather to pick out those characteristics of each system which are, or have been, significant in its development, particularly with regard to assessment and accountability procedures.

In each national case study, the first part of the discussion is concerned with all four of the principal themes identified—competence, content, competition and control as they are interrelated in the development of evaluation procedures for assessing the performance of individual pupil's performance within the education system. The second part of each case study is concerned with the part played by assessment procedures within the system as a whole, and is thus explicitly concerned with the very different ways in which the necessary provision for systemic control is provided for in the two countries. Although these two aspects of the part played by evaluation procedures are necessarily interrelated in practice, they are treated separately for the sake of clarity.

This thesis is written from an English perspective for a largely English audience. Thus whilst the case studies are intended to offer comparable insights, they are not similar in format. Chapter Five on the French system includes a great deal more descriptive material than Chapter Six, on the assumption that readers will in general already be relatively familiar with the English context.

Both chapters, however, focus on the struggle between various interest groups to gain influence within the education system and by so doing establish their own value priorities in the evaluative criteria of the assessment apparatus. It is this assessment apparatus—of individual
progress, of teacher effectiveness, of systemic efficiency - which is the template that gives meaning to all educational activity; it is the more or less explicit articulation of educational goals. Thus the two chapters that follow must necessarily embrace - albeit briefly - the whole range of systemic activity, if they are to conceptualise the social role of assessment at all adequately. If sometimes this results in what may seem a protracted departure from the subject of assessment per se, the underlying theme of its role in the struggle to control education practice by defining the criteria of accountability is omnipresent. The third chapter in this section, Chapter Seven, draws together these separate analyses in a consideration of those features which the two systems have in common and the significance of those more general developments in forms of evaluation which may be identified as acting upon and within educational systems at the present time.

The methodological problems of comparative education research are legion. Not only do they encompass the whole range of issues inherent in the quantitative/qualitative dilemma which characterises educational research in general, they also include quite specific problems of cultural assumptions. The most obvious manifestation of this latter issue is in the problem of translation and the ease with which the researcher may translate words literally and fail to examine the differences of interpretation which surround an apparently similar term in the two languages. 'Accountability' which is a key analytic concept in this thesis and one which is rédolent with meaning in England provides a good example in this respect, since not only is there no equivalent word in the French language, there is as yet no equivalent concept in French educational parlance. Thus whilst the very lack of such a concept in France makes the English-French comparison a particularly desirable one to pursue in an attempt to understand the emergence of accountability as
a policy in English education, the inadequacy of any of the available French terms - 'rendre compte', 'la responsabilité', or the 'franglais' 'l'accountabilité' to encompass fully the meaning of the word accountability in English, renders any comparative empirical research in this area, particularly problematic. In the same way, the French term for the study of educational measurement, 'la docimologie', has no ready translation in English.

The problem, however, goes much deeper even than the issue of language, down to the level of the cultural constructs on which that language is itself based. Thus in the collection of interview, documentary and observational data of the kind which is the basis for Part II of this thesis, it is necessary to be constantly aware of the 'structuring silences', the cultural assumptions and traditions which are not explicitly rehearsed in policy debates because they are deeply enshrined in the very cultural constructions which determine how such debates are formulated.

Every effort has been made in the analysis that follows to address this problem. A considerable number of direct quotations have been included to maximise the provision of evidence as well as interpretation. Although these quotations have been translated, since the thesis is written within the English educational system, the original French is provided in each case in the footnotes, to enable the reader to detect any infelicities of translation. The findings of the study have already been submitted to, and in some cases, discussed, with both English and French respondents, so that the researcher's interpretation can be checked and modified against the perceptions and understandings of the participants themselves. Whilst the analysis presented here has not as yet been subjected to such a critique in its entirety, every effort has been made to check its veracity at various preceding stages of
development. Nevertheless, the account remains essentially hypothesis-raising with emphasis on the formulation of theoretical insights rather than the testing-out of generalisations. Similarly, no attempt has been made to construct an original historical account from primary sources. Rather, existing historical studies are used as appropriate to extend and contextualise the attempt to understand the social significance of assessment procedures.

The Ideological Context

At least half a century before the essentially ad hoc, 'anarchic' (Veulard, 1970) evolution of a state education system even began to emerge in England in the latter half of the nineteenth century, French educational provision was already being rapidly and systematically bureaucratised. The legacy of their different origins endures in the fundamental differences between the two systems that are still apparent today, which are the reason for the choice of France and England as case studies for this thesis. Nevertheless it has already been argued that the underlying societal movements on which the development of the two systems was based were essentially similar, concerned in both cases with the attestation of competence, the rationalisation of content, the regulation of competition and the provision of control as already suggested.

The analysis which follows addresses both of these themes. The first part of the chapter provides a brief sketch of some of the more important political and cultural traditions which have underlain the evolution of the distinctive legitimating ideology of French educational provision. Subsequent sections of the chapter attempt to explain
significant policy developments in the field of educational assessment in terms of this legitimating ideology as it has mediated the more general pressure within the developing education system for social selection and control.

In France, the provision of mass education started rather earlier and more explicitly than in England, with the catharsis of the 1789 revolution and the equally fundamental changes brought about by the Napoleonic era. Nevertheless the rationale was arguably very similar in both cases - on the one hand egalitarianism and a concern for social justice, and on the other a concern for order and control. Throughout the 19th century there was to be conflict between those liberals who saw mass (elementary) education as a form of control as opposed to those conservative and church interests who feared its potential to make people discontented with their lot and to replace the largely fictional idea of "a peasant people living in dignity, sobriety and ordered calm" (Anderson, 1975) with the very real unrest brought about not by education per se, but by industrialisation itself.

In 1816, the newly restored monarchy did much to redress Napoleon's antipathy to mass education, issuing an Ordinance making primary school attendance compulsory (Vaughan and Archer, 1971). This move was directly concerned with strengthening social control since the teachers were to be under the supervision of the Université and the moral control of the local mayor and priest, in the 'Communal Council'. Of low status and poorly paid as they were, the instituteur's remuneration depended directly on the inspector's judgement. The passing of the Loi Guizot in 1833 which consolidated state control over all branches of education was an even more explicit expression that the traditional fear of elementary education as a source of social unrest had given way to a considerable extent to the more liberal view that such control could be
strengthened by elementary schooling, provided the teachers themselves were strictly controlled. The aim was to avoid "fomenting in the pupil-teachers (and hence teachers) that distaste for their very modest situation, that excessive thirst for material well-being that today torment the destiny of so many men and corrupts their character" (Loi Guizot, 1833). This concern with moral control reflects a more general concern with the basis for social order.

The growth of educational arrangements in France, like the growth of most other French social institutions, needs to be understood fundamentally as the search for an ideological synthesis for the 'new' (i.e. post revolution) society. The explicit ideologies informing post revolutionary France - 'liberté', 'égalité' and 'fraternité' have deep roots in French history and command considerable consensus. They have, however, become increasingly contradictory. The ideal of centralisation espoused in the interests of égalité and fraternité, fundamentally conflicts with the equally powerful ideal of individual liberté. The 'fatal irreconcilability' (Thompson, 1964) between the political and social strands of the revolutionary tradition became increasingly apparent as the revolutionary emphasis on the paramount rights of the individual were superseded by Napoleon's emphasis on the needs of the state. This tension spreads right through the French educational system - in its finance, its organisation and its content, a tension clearly recognised by Condorcet in his distinction between the necessity for the state to finance education but not to control its operation if individual rights were to be enhanced and protected (Lynch, 1973). This tension is visibly still acute in the contemporary contradictions of the fifth republic in which a succession of social and political crises have led intellectuals as diverse as Camus, Sartre and Marcuse to see a threat to human personality itself in modern society (see Chapter Three). This
threat was arguably and in a sense, ironically much less under the 'new right' Giscardian 'laisser faire' philosophy of the non-intervention of the state than it is now with an increasingly active state presence in all areas of public life under the new socialist government. As Thompson (1964) suggests, "The Renaissance antithesis of sovereign individual and sovereign state has persisted in sharper terms than in England. Even when France has been most anxious to make men free, she has been tempted the next moment to believe that they can be forced to be free" (p. 126).

But although this tension is particularly acute and explicit in France, it is not confined to France, being rather a manifestation of that more general tension characteristic of all mass education systems between the 'old humanists', 'the new industrialists' and 'the public educators' (Williams, 1961). In France overt statements of these three different educational ideologies, referred to by Fourier as the 'traditional', 'the technocratic' and the 'liberatrice' (egalitarian), can be traced back to the mid eighteenth century. The 'old humanist' lobby represented by the conservative and catholic interests stood for the traditional hierarchy and against disturbing the status quo. By contrast, 'liberal bourgeois' opinion was in favour of an increased measure of social mobility and meritocracy and a third 'republican' group was concerned with the 'masses' need for education as a human right and for social order. Archer (1979) has described the complex and characteristically French process of pressure group politics which has led to the predominance of different educational ideologies with the changing balance of economic and political interests.

Nevertheless, despite the virtual eclipse of the aristocratic classes in the 1789 Revolution, the power of the traditional 'humanistic' emphasis in education (Durkheim, 1977) continued to underpin a deliberately
separate 'pedagogic universe' (Anderson, 1975) and one that consistently predominated over the 'third estate' of the aspiring bourgeoisie and their emphasis on instrumental, scientific, rational and industrially-oriented education until recent decades. Since in France, unlike England, the entrepreneurial group was, and remained, subordinate to the power of the professional, bureaucratic strata, the 'distancing' function of education in perpetuating an esoteric and abstract curriculum geared to the reproduction of this professional elite endured the political upheavals of three centuries and did not change radically until the 1930s. Indeed Bourdieu and Passeron's analysis indicates that it has still to be convincingly defeated by the consistent pressure of the increasingly dominant 'new industrialist' lobby for more vocationally oriented education. The 'ideal type' of the French education system, they suggest, is still one which emerges from "an academic Christian reinterpretation of the social demands of an aristocracy" (p. 15) and manifests "brilliance without originality and heaviness without scientific weight ... The pedantry of lightness and the coquetry of erudition" (p. 202) (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1976).

Contributing to the longevity of this "lunar landscape, coldly brilliant but with its dark shadows" (Turpie, 1978) has been the inevitable inertia of the education system per se, despite apparently major changes in policy in recent years. Since it is impossible to change such central elements as buildings, curricula, examinations and teacher practice at anything like the same pace that political climates change, the history of French education (as indeed that of any other education system) during the past two centuries provides few examples of radical change in educational policy and many more examples of compromise and the uneasy co-existence of contradictory practices. 7

The enduring conflict between humanistic and technical studies in
the school curriculum is also partly due to this inertia. Despite a long standing and explicit policy commitment to raising the size and status of technical and vocational training, traditional 'pure' academic subjects still retain their prestigious position throughout French education with the one notable exception of the pinnacle of the system, the Grandes Écoles. The belief in high level applied training which lay behind Napoleon Bonaparte's support of the 'Grandes Écoles' re-emerged with regard to the lycée curriculum after the experiences of the Franco-Prussian war convinced Napoleon III that "the nation with the most schools will be the first nation in the world" (Zeldin, 1977, p. 15). The Salvandy reform of 1847 proposed a much increased measure of science and maths and the option of a 'modern' strand in the lycée curriculum as was also suggested by Dumas, the Dean of the Faculty of Science in Paris. A similar attempt, to reform the curriculum in the interest of the 'new industrialists' was made by Fourtoul under Louis Napoleon but all such attempts made little impact on the dominant 'classical' (i.e. old humanist) orientation, certainly until the turn of the century, (Durkheim, 1977) and arguably until well after the second world war when gradually maths and science came to displace classics as the subjects necessary for entry to the élite professions and courses. A Ministry of Education statement in 1967 suggested that "Latin is still the main medium of contemporary thought" (Slevin, 1974) and despite the momentous struggles of 1968 there is still conflict between an emphasis on applied studies and that on the development of individual reason and rationality as the basis of democratic politics (Vaughan and Archer, 1971, p. 141). The development of an individual's character and morality is still dominant compared to the development of specific competences, at least in élite education. Above all, the heritage of the classical tradition of rhetoric - the learning of the rules of
of argument which Hoskins (1980) identifies as the foundation of Western scholarship, is still central in French educational policy and practice. As Turpie (1978) suggests, "French schools in the 1970s are still based on philosophies of a different age and country; they follow with remarkable fidelity and with considerable success, if at a considerable price, the Social Contract of John Locke, and Bishop Berkely's most English doctrine of Benevolent Self Interest, both coming up for 300 years old and still going strong, at least in France" (p. 4).

If, as Anderson (1975) suggests, the most outstanding 19th century French educators such as Carnot, Guizot and Cousin were able to achieve some integration of catholic conservatism, bourgeois meritocracy and republican philanthropy, this may have been because they were able in some way to approach pragmatically "the anxieties of a society which has long cherished the letter of Cartesianism but feared the gleaming light of analysis" (Zolberg and Zolberg, 1971). The tension between étatism and individualism and between the ideal of equality and the reality of a deeply divided, hierarchical society has frequently been solved by pursuing pragmatic policies within a more acceptable rhetoric such as national need or democratisation.

If few would have overtly echoed Rousseau's belief that "the poor have no need of education. It is shaped by their situation ... they can have no other" (quoted by Vaughan and Archer, 1971, p. 159), underneath the liberal political rhetoric of equality, economic efficiency and social tradition dictated a continuing élitism which was readily justified by the persistent emphasis on state need at the expense of individual social mobility.

A second source of compromise is seen in those times when Ministers' ambition for reform is brought to fulfilment by an unusually high degree of support for a particular policy which finds favour with more than one
ideological perspective. The institution of the 11+ examination was a classic example of this sort of policy consensus in England and in the mass provision of primary schools in the 1880s and the reform of the lycées in the 1930s, were similar examples. But such examples are rare and another more general explanation of how these contradictory ideologies have been made to work together is that offered by Neave (1981). He suggests that the characteristically French conception of the state is very different from the English traditional belief in local autonomy. Central to this French concept is the state as the protector of liberty (i.e. through the law which is the main defence against anarchy). The state is a cultural entity and thus a legitimate synthetic source of educational ideology. These ideas have been an important message of the 'hidden curriculum' of French schooling. Particularly powerful is the Napoleonic tradition which legitimates strong hierarchical authority at every level from Minister of Education down to individual pupil. This may be part of the reason why there has been less conflict than there might have been between the strong and contradictory educational ideologies of individual versus state rights, personal versus national development, liberal versus applied studies.

Another more recent basis for compromise may be identified by an analysis of more contemporary ideological movements. Kedward (1981) suggests that recently there has been a shift in the intellectual climate away from literature and philosophy (old humanists) not this time in favour of the technical and scientific education of the 'new industrialists' but in favour of the 'public educators', 'the new story tellers' and their more empirical concern with popular problems. This latter tradition is equivalent to that in England of Raymond Williams or E.P. Thompson. Although convincing, this argument is belied by the recent rise of the 'New Right' in France and the new individualist Gaullist politics of
influential figures like Alain de Benoist (Johnson, 1980). Thody (1981), in similar vein, questions whether it is 'Vichy' or 'Mitterand' that represents the real France, setting out the view of the currently influential 'Nouveaux Philosophes' and in particular, Bernard-Henri Levy that, far from being the aberration it is popularly regarded as being, the pro-ecclesiastical, elitist Vichy regime of the 1940s which stood for 'travail, famille et patrie' rather than 'liberté', 'égalité' et 'fraternité' actually reflected the real France and is still an ideology which characterises all shades of the left/right spectrum. If this is so, it offers one explanation as to why the most traditional conservative values continue to be a major factor in educational policy-making.

The work of other more left-wing intellectuals however such as Marcuse or Foucault suggests that traditional categories are no longer adequate to explain contemporary developments. As Chapter Three suggested, the change from entrepreneurial to corporate capitalism, to an increasingly 'overloaded state' and to a predominantly technocratic value-orientation has had its effect on educational ideology. Part of this effect has been brought about by the erosion of traditional power bases. There are now several elites – each with its own priorities for education reflecting its own power base. But there is also considerable overlap between the various ecclesiastical, aristocratic, economic and democratic values of these groups, resulting in sometimes quixotic changes of educational policy and militating against any enduring educational consensus. This situation may be seen as both symptom and cause of the deep crisis in French education today in which the increasing impossibility of coming anywhere near a value consensus, or even of pretending one can be covered up only by a pragmatic emphasis on growth (Lynch, 1973).

Prost's analysis, referring to the period immediately before the events of 1968, is similar in tone:
"But as the society, absorbed with worries about its growth, refuses to say clearly on what system of values education should rest, which is a political and philosophical choice, education itself becomes impossible. The tragedy is that these systems which are falling into ruins cannot be replaced by the more practical and functional conceptions which industrial society suggests to the school; prepare the workers, teach them to learn, etc. Economic growth and social integration cannot long pretend to be other than what they are: the means to which society must give ends; they cannot take the place of a system of values and norms which all education requires ..." (Prost, 1968, p. 493) 13

And yet it is possible to find essentially similar criticism written at much earlier periods. The following quotation from Pégy, written in 1904, applies with equal force today and is important in suggesting that educational demoralisation is not unique to the contemporary period.

"When a society cannot teach, it is that society cannot learn. For all humanity to teach is at root to learn. A society which does not learn is a society which does not like itself; which has no self-respect; and this is precisely the case of modern society." (p 24). 14

The foregoing analyses suggest however that the contemporary crisis is fundamentally different in character because it is not, as hitherto, a crisis of conflicting values. It is rather a crisis of no values in which the hegemony of technological rationality admits of no alternative interpretations of efficiency. There can be no overt value - position now because there is only a consensus of uncertainty (Hanley et al., 1984). To make clear and to justify this assertion it is necessary to examine more detailed trends in contemporary French educational provision and this is the subject of the rest of this chapter.
The Political Context

If the first step in seeking to understand the relationship between education and its societal context is to understand something of the ideological tensions which must continually be balanced in an uneasy compromise between priorities, the second is to trace how these same conflicting priorities find practical expression in the education system and, in particular, in policy making. Clearly these are highly complex and much researched fields and the intention here is only to touch on a number of key aspects central to the analysis in view. Two such aspects are the highly centralised nature of the French state machinery and the relative instability of French politics.

In one sense these two aspects are united in that the very rigidity of centralisation means that a relatively minor reform challenges the whole system - administrative and political. Given that government sees itself as the embodiment of the regime, not just the temporary holder of power, reform can never be just administrative (Hayward, 1974). Nevertheless, the two characteristics - the administrative and the political - find their origins in very different traditions. Centralisation is a French tradition which stretches back through Napoleon, Louis XIV, Richelieu, the Bourbon Kings and ultimately, the Carolingian Empire. Political instability, on the other hand, may be accounted for by the lack of a unified elite and, in particular, constant strife between church and state and between regional interests. It is possible to argue that although national unity was made by the kings, this has not prevented a continuing conflict between different political and religious factions.

One major effect of political instability and of the necessarily large number of coalition governments which has resulted, has been the tendency for educational policy to stray only rarely from a middle-of-
the road position acceptable across a broad spectrum of opinion (Archer, 1979). It is ironic that although most movements for reform have emerged at times of left-wing domination - such as the early 1880s or immediately after the first world war (Cahn, 1972), actual reforms have more often taken place when democracy was at a low ebb as, for example, during the 1940-44 Vichy regime or in the early days of the fifth Republic in 1959. This is because political will is almost never in itself sufficient to bring about a political reality unless there is sufficient popular support for one party to legitimate an essentially autocratic approach to reform. Although it is true, as far as the reality of social life is concerned, that "On ne change pas la société par décret" (Crozier, 1954), there are many instances which show major structural and institutional changes can be formally brought about in this way. The history of the fifth Republic in its earliest stages and the more recent Loi Sauvage on university participation are clear examples. Such radical change can only take place however when government has the will and the security to enforce a decision without waiting for the necessary political consensus to develop, assuming rather it will do so afterwards (Neave, 1981). By contrast, "pour faire une politique de gauche il faut un gouvernement de droite" - the often insecure leftist administrations cannot typically take such radical steps.

Another effect of relatively unstable politics has been the frequency with which Ministers of Education have changed and with them at least a personal and often a political change of direction. This is well illustrated in recent times by the replacement in 1969 after the events of 1968 of M. Faure, author of far-reaching reform legislation, by M. Olivier, whose very different ideals prevented the Faure reforms becoming a reality. Similarly when the furore against some of M. René Haby's proposed reforms prompted President Giscard D'Estaing to replace
him in 1976 with M. Christian Beullac, it did not require an overt change in political direction to ensure that the very different career background and orientation of the two men - the former a career educationist, the latter an industrialist - left much of the spirit, if not the letter, of M. Haby's wide reaching and controversial reform in ruins. More recently still, the advent of a socialist minister of education, M. Alain Savary, has led to more explicit policy changes concerned with providing equal and relevant provision for all children and not simply equality of opportunity as expressed in the 'meritocratic' ideology which has been dominant since the Second World War.  

It would, however, be quite wrong to see the ebb and flow of priorities in educational provision as merely one of reflecting the balance of party politics. In her comprehensive analysis, Archer (1979) shows clearly how a number of different pressure groups, with their own idiosyncratic currency, are involved in the identification of educational priorities. Particularly important historically has been the church, the original provider of schooling, bastion of traditional values and implacably opposed to central control by an explicitly secular state. The changing fortunes in this battle are briefly summarised by Karady (1979) who identifies the authoritarian phase of the Restoration, the Second Empire and the last phase of the Second Republic as being against state monopoly of education, whereas the July Monarchy, the early Second Republic and the liberal Second Empire as being for it.

The bitter struggle between church and state for ideological control of the content of education and by the church for formal authority within the state system is still today one of the most delicate issues facing the Minister of Education. Although the 1959 Loi Debré did a great deal to provide a mutually acceptable relationship between the mainly Catholic
private schools and the state system, further legislation is currently impending on this issue. What appears now to be a political battle between the étatist left and the individualist right is rooted in a much older conflict between republican and traditional (religious) ideologies and hence, between different notions of equality.

There are thus no neat correspondences between ideological and political positions since these merge and contradict each other according to the issue. The activities of the various teacher unions both now and in the past illustrate this well. It is often difficult to predict or understand the stance taken by a particular teachers' union on any one issue. The widespread opposition among teacher unions to the Haby reforms of 1965 provides a good example of this (Duclaud-Williams, 1982) when in general terms, teachers found grounds for rejecting as a 'cosmetic palliative' something they had been fighting for for decades. This must be understood in terms of the claims of rival ideologies further complicated by more mundane considerations of conditions of service. As such it reinforces the theoretical argument of Chapter Four that any analysis which is based on, rather than merely illustrated by, empirical reality must reject any simple determinism of cultural and economic reproduction and address the reality of "contradictions, conflicts, mediations and especially resistances, as well as reproduction" (Apple, 1982, p. 24).

But if it is important to be alive to such ideological contradictions and their effects at the political level, it is just as important, though more easily ignored, to recognise their operation through the nominally neutral hierarchy of government administration. Indeed as Pickles (1974) suggests, 'politics' must be understood as the complex interpenetration of formal structures and political activity which cannot be divided. Clearly the tradition of centralisation is crucial in this respect, the
ideological cornerstone of "the One and Indivisible French Republic" (Hayward, 1974). Yet despite the fact that the ethos of centralisation combines the powerful and traditional forces of rational efficiency, equality and fraternity, it is nevertheless increasingly being challenged both in principle and in its laborious practice as strengthening rival ideals of personal and local need, freedom and efficiency, challenge tradition. The implications of this contemporary pressure for change in the traditional modes of systemic control are a central theme of the analysis of this thesis, as they give rise to new, often more pervasive modes of systemic control which reflect the changing basis of legitimation.

At the present time, the education system is having to respond to the tension created by, on the one hand, the economy's need for careful manpower planning, and hence strong central control, and, on the other, the powerful political and professional lobby for greater local freedom. According to Weber (1947), this is a characteristic problem of the modern political order of Western capitalism, which requires a reconciliation between widespread demands for democratisation, itself a product of mass enfranchisement, and the consequent need to 'woo' the masses and the location of real power, not in parliamentary democracy, but with the leaders of these bureaucratised political parties which are themselves a response to this same increase in political activity of the masses (quoted by Giddens, 1972, p. 51).

**The Administrative Context**

The celebrated centralisation of French education is both a major cause of and at the same time, something of a solution to the paradoxes with which it is beset. Agblemagnon, quoted by Perrin (1979), suggests "what has come out of our debates is, above all, a process - that of administration", but a process which assumes, nevertheless, a consensus
which is, in reality, lacking "the administration's problem is perhaps having to manage contradiction where the logic of that administration excludes any contradiction" (Ardoino, quoted by Agblemagnon, 1979). 21

The politics of the supposedly neutral administration of the education system may be addressed at two levels. First the interests which were or are embodied in the notion of centralisation itself and second, the political interests which govern the reality of the control of education in practice. Certainly the French were not slow to recognise either the power which lay in the conditioning of young minds which control over the education system provided (Vaughan and Archer, 1971), nor that a centralised system could be made particularly efficient in this respect. 22

Under the 'ancien régime', schooling had been important in helping to provide for the intellectual homogeneity of the different classes. "Rationality was for the privileged; for the poor there was religion with faith the guarantee of popular passivity" (Vaughan and Archer, 1971, p. 118).

"By moral and religious instruction, it already foresees a different order of needs, just as real as the others and which providence has placed in the heart of the poor just as in the blessed of this world, for the dignity of human life and the protection of social order." (Guizot, 1833) 23

But despite the traditional utility of the church for this purpose, it was at the same time a threat to the secular predominance of the state. "From 1815 the battle of the church and the bourgeoisie as to who should act as proxy for the masses in deciding the shape of their meagre educational provision" has been constant (Lynch, 1973, p. 8). Small French communities were split for more than a century with the priest as symbolic head of one side and the village school teacher as head of the other despite the alternating political fortunes of the church throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. 24
The post Revolution struggle between church and state for control of the education system was an ideological struggle which increasingly fuelled the political desire for centralisation on the part of secular interests. As industrialisation helped to erode the traditional control of church and family in the 19th century, this concern was further strengthened by the need to find a new moral force. Thus in the 1880s Jules Ferry relieved teachers of clerical inspection in favour of government control of curricula, textbooks, examinations and the appointment of teachers. Elementary teachers from the time of Guizot onwards (1833) were subject to severe discipline in training so that they might subsequently enforce severe discipline in schools, thereby ensuring that the 'masses' grew up with a proper respect for legitimate authority (Zeldin, 1971, p. 161).

It is not surprising that "the parties that contended in turn for domination of the educational system regarded the possession of this huge state edifice as the principal spoils of the victor" (Archer, 1979). The church's struggle against the secularisation which was the increasingly explicit policy of centralisation (Hans, 1958) took place within the context of another economic struggle between the bourgeois and the working classes (Cahn, 1972). The combatants were slow to recognise that "with the schools system [the state] had brought into being a monster it could not control ... like the bureaucracy, they did not just serve the state but made their own preservation and expansion a primary goal" (Zeldin, 1971, p. 161). "... Comme la cosmogonie de Ptolémy plaçait la Terre au centre du tout, nos modernes administrateurs mettent le monopole d'État au coeur de l'enseignement" (Laurent, 1980, p. 30).

The establishment of an educational monopoly was clearly the motivation behind Napoleon's educational innovations. Every commune was
to provide a school" (Vaughan and Archer, 1971). In 1805 Napoleon wrote "il n’y aura pas d’État politique fixé, si il n’y a pas un corps enseignant avec des principes fixés". Thus in 1808 Napoleon instituted the Université—an attempt at a state monopoly of educational provision which included the key areas of teacher provision and training, schools, qualifications and the curriculum. The intention was that expressed in article 38 of Titre V of the Décret of 17th March 1808, to form "des citoyens attachés à leur religion, à leur prince, à leur patrie, et à leur famille". Later when Guizot came in 1833 to pass the law that instituted elementary education on a mass scale, he told the prefects "we have tried to create in every commune a moral force which the Government can use at need" (quoted by Zeldin, 1971, Vol. II, p. 150). The creation of 'académies' in 1808 and later, in 1854, their subdivision into départements, each administered through a centrally appointed official and a series of representative councils, provided the centralised bureaucratic structure that endures to this day. The structure was further strengthened with regard to education by the creation in 1852 of Inspecteurs Généraux to advise the Grand Maître of the Université.

In his concept of a bureaucracy of professional educators charged with the administration of a clearly prescribed educational programme, Napoleon was drawing on a model inspired by the Jesuits and by the 18th century Savoyan Kings of Turin (Haus, 1958). Recognising that the school had a potentially powerful role to play in cementing and encouraging nationalism, (Barnard, 1969), Napoleon asserted that schools must be of not in the State—"as the state is one, its schools must be the same everywhere". (Liard, 1894). Thus "monopoly was the first law of the system: it did not tolerate the least competition" (Crozier, 1970).

This logic of educational provision was borrowed from the much
earlier political legitimation for centralisation which had underpinned the centralised control of the monarchy since the decline of feudalism - namely that in a democracy, the locus of power must be the central government who are elected to represent the 'true will' of the population (Halls, 1976).

At the beginning of the nineteenth century "On the continent the bureaucratic state was already in being and nothing more was required than the transference to other hands of the pre-existent, machinery and its employment for novel purposes" (Halevy, 1960). Thus it is important to recognise that "the development in France of a rationalised, articulated, bureaucratised educational system and the absence of such a system in England is therefore a special case of more fundamental differences in the development of institutions in both countries" (Laqueur, 1973, p. 60) - despite the common pressures to which each was subject, as already outlined.

Equally, the patriarchal fervour inspired by the Revolution and later, the advent of Napoleon, created both the idea and the reality of a centralised education system. Such a system was highly desirable in terms of the expressive order, helping to build a strong nationalism as a basis for state and hence economic stability (Barnard, 1969) and diverting potential hostility abroad and away from the internal class-based dissatisfactions and disunity which would otherwise, under capitalism, inevitably grow. At an instrumental level too, as Karady (1970) points out, the centralisation of education made possible its subjugation to the state in direct conflict to the traditional domination of the church. Hence it made possible a new rationale for social order and control more in keeping with changes in the economy. The battle over educational control was, however, long and bitter (Vaughan and Archer, 1971), principally because it represented a fundamental and
irreversible shift in the instrumental order (Lynch, 1971) - the basis for the allocation of social roles as well as in the legitimating ideology. In both respects, educational assessment was to play a vital part.

The Assessment of Competence

In the battle over control, assessment procedures had a crucial role to play in helping to reinforce the pursuit of state rather than church inspired notions of competence, and, in so doing, had a major influence on curriculum content. It was not the provision per se of schooling for the masses which was significant. It was the changing content of that schooling.

"For long the church schools dispensed education as though it were a mystic initiation into sacred truths ... traditional Catholic teaching was designed not to awaken the child but to teach him that desire could never be satisfied, except in the next world" (Zeldin, 1971, Vol. II, p. 101).

Examinations made possible and indeed essential a different emphasis in schooling in which, though even many liberals and intellectuals continued with the conservative and clerical interests to support 'religion for the masses and rationality for the privileged" (Vaughan and Archer, 1971), the growing importance of formal qualifications and their changing character belied this belief in practice. The qualifications associated with entering into teacher-training and qualifying as a teacher provide a good illustration of this.

As early as 1793 the idea of formally certifying competence may be identified in the establishment of an official certificate in civic virtue as a requirement for all instituteurs in the 'écoles centrales'. From 1816 however elementary teachers had to have a 'brevet' qualification but the certificate in civic virtue was no longer required. Instead the
model of the recently instituted Baccalauréat exam (1806) and the tenuous scholarship system set up by Napoleon in 1808 was increasingly to be the source of assumptions about what was to be taught and how it should be tested. In 1831 the demise of the 'certificat d'instruction religieuse' marked a further stage in the changing content of schooling. Although pressure for this change came as much from anti-clericalism as from any explicit desire to 'modernise' schooling, the precise form of the emerging curriculum was as much a reflection of what was assessable as it was of what was relevant. Indeed, assessment procedures have consistently been an important weapon in the state's struggle against clerical interests in education since not only do they not easily lend themselves to reinforcing religious and affective aspects of the curriculum but also the very existence of coveted national certificates over which the state has consistently held a monopoly has forced church schools very largely to accept the state-determined curriculum.

Thus at the very earliest stages of mass educational provision, assessment procedures were already playing a highly significant part in introducing those features characteristic of schooling in an industrial society with which it is associated: the formal attestation of competence, and the replacement of the traditional, holistic concept of education as being concerned with both mind and character, with the more limited, predominantly academic, curriculum which, being organised into subjects and levels, is amenable to formal written, and to a lesser extent, oral examination. Whereas in the late eighteenth century it was the non-cognitive criteria of character and virtue that were paramount in deciding who was fit to provide elementary education for the masses, by the early nineteenth century this emphasis had been replaced by a concern with cognitive competences as assessed in the 'brevet'.

But these changes in the certification procedures for elementary
school teachers did not simply reflect and reinforce changing notions of competence and the appropriate content of schooling, they also heralded a changing basis of social control. In the ideological battle between church and state, examinations were to prove a decisive weapon, not only in establishing academic rather than spiritual criteria as the paramount goal of education, but also in introducing control based on the idea of a qualification-based meritocracy rather than the ascriptive criteria of birth and breeding. One example of this process was the establishment of the Certificat d'Études Primaires as a national certificate in 1880. Not only had the London International Exhibition of 1862 convinced the French - as it had the English - of the need for new skills to be taught. It was also necessary at that time to find some means of retaining children in elementary school. Thus in 1867 the then Minister of Education, Duruy, established a primary leaving exam so that the lure of formal qualifications would meet both these needs. In so doing he also provided a significant stimulus to the idea of a qualification-based meritocracy.

For the elite, too, similar changes were taking place. The establishment of the Baccalauréat in 1806 meant that, as in England, what had formerly been primarily a residential and informal 'stage' of education for the elite became part of the bureaucratic structure of the Université. The 'Maîtrise és Arts' was now to mark a specific grade in the Université, regulated by an examination to be known as the 'Baccalauréat'. As Frémy and Frémy (1978) suggest, the Baccalauréat examination which marked the first 'grade' of the Napoleonic Université was a direct legacy from the orders of chivalry of feudal times when it marked the stage of apprenticeship before the attainment of a particular social role.
"As in the middle ages, the whole of society was regulated on the basis of a feudal hierarchy, the idea of the young knight came to be applied more broadly to refer to all those about to start on a career. Monks who were not yet priests were called 'bacheliers' [bachelors!], a young unmarried man, an apprentice studying a craft and lastly a theologian or a student who had achieved the first grade of the university. The word 'bachelier' is now no longer used with this one exception." (Frémy and Frémy, 1978)

This influence of feudal bases for social organisation on the emerging structure of the exam-based qualifications which were to replace them in the new social order of an industrialised society is also manifest in the widespread use of the term 'brevet' for lower and more applied qualifications. From 1816 prospective elementary school teachers had to sit for the 'brevet' examination. The word 'brevet' - which came to be widely used for such examinations - incorporates the same feudal idea of apprenticeship and the attestation of a particular level of competence. Traditionally the brevet was a royally-given right to an apprenticeship:

"An act, taken before a lawyer, by which an apprentice and a master made a mutual commitment, the apprentice to learn an art or a craft, the master to teach him, during a certain period of time and under certain agreed conditions" (Cherval, 1874, p. 5.)

The ideology implicit in this choice of feudal terms to label the different rungs of the new educational hierarchy points to the way in which, during the 19th century, social status became increasingly bound up with educational qualifications for all but the very few remaining aristocrats whose status was still essentially of feudal origin.

In particular, in a century of social and political upheaval characterised by the growing power of the bourgeoisie, the anti-clerical movement and anti-monarchical republicanism (Archer, 1979), the Baccalauréat and to a lesser extent other forms of certification played an increasingly crucial role as the arbiter of membership of the
increasingly powerful bougeois class - a new sort of elite whose status depended on academic qualifications, confirmed by attendance at the Université faculties and the more professional Grandes Écoles and military colleges.

As Vaughan and Archer (1974) suggest,

"The role of the baccalauréat epitomised administrative control over the testing of merit and constituted a demarcation line between secondary and higher education. It also symbolised the social bias of the system towards the bourgeoisie" (Vaughan and Archer, p. 143)

The way in which formal qualifications continue to provide for the reproduction of the bougeoisie has been analysed in detail by Bourdieu (1974) in terms of his concept of 'cultural capital'. Although the most prestigious schools in France are state rather than private, Bourdieu's work shows clearly how the internal processes of schooling, and particularly of selection, were increasingly oriented in favour of the reproduction of the elite rather than constituting a genuine meritocracy. The school system was designed to favour bourgeois 'cultural capital' and experience, so that as well as his practical problems, the working class child had to demonstrate a good deal more ability and tenacity reach the same point in the education system as the child from a more favoured background. "At every stage of their school careers the individuals who survive the system exhibit less and less the career characteristics which have eliminated the other members of the category" (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1976, p. 82). ³⁰ Although the French did not develop an elite, private school system equivalent to the English public schools, the success of different lycées in preparing students for the Baccalauréat and the entrance examinations for the Grandes Écoles continues to reinforce inequality in the system.

The ideology of national homogeneity which was one of the first
principles of the Université meant also that the Université clung to the principle that all educated Frenchmen should share a common culture and was opposed to allowing pupils a choice of subjects (Anderson, 1975). Attempts to introduce even a minimal degree of specialisation between classics and science - such as that of the early 1850s largely failed. 31

"By 1912 the Baccalaureat had become the barrier which separated the bourgeoisie from the population as a whole, but it had also become the leveller which erased distinctions within that class" (Goblet, 1967).

It had also become of major importance both in influencing the way in which the centralised curriculum objectives were defined and in helping to make those objectives a reality in the schools.

Assessment in the Regulation of Competition

Gradually, however, as in England, the emphasis on examinations to provide for standardised curricula and the attestation of competence gave way during the nineteenth century to an increasing emphasis on their role in the regulation of competition for places within the new, more flexible social order. With the expansion of educational provision in the twentieth century, this role now predominates. Whilst both England and France are facing very similar pressures in this respect, both having provided for a 'comprehensive' secondary school for example, England is still pursuing the long-standing tradition of external examinations as the main basis for the regulation of competition and the control of disaffection. Attempts at radical reform such as the abolition of 16+ examinations have largely come to nothing, such change as there has been being confined largely to issues of administrative efficiency and the wider provision of traditional 'forms of examining in response to structural changes in the labour market. 32 Why this should
be so is discussed in Chapter Six. In France, by contrast, pressures for greater democracy and opportunity in educational provision have resulted in a radical restructuring of the traditionally highly selective and elitist educational system, the commitment to comprehensivisation going far beyond the institution of a common school, as has largely been the case in England, to include significant changes in curriculum, internal school organisation and, not least, assessment procedures. Notable among these last has been the virtual abolition of all public examinations below the Baccalauréat level together with, officially at least, the regular promotion tests during the course of schooling and their replacement with continuous assessment by teachers. The Baccalauréat, too, whilst still a formal public examination, has been subject to major reorganisation and there is growing pressure for it also to become an award based on continuous assessment (Jessel, 1980).

But the recent Prost report on the lycées (1983) has stopped well short of abolition in its recommendations for Baccalauréat reform, suggesting instead a new, simpler organisation for the exam with largely local papers aimed at certifying "a certain number of competences linked to 'une caractéristique référential pour chaque type d'apprentissage'" (p. 146), and based to a considerable extent on continuous assessment. This is the way Prost suggests of overcoming the well-known subject and geographical variations in the supposedly uniform 'Bac' without provoking the hostility which would result from any attempt to remove one of the last bastions of tradition in French education.

**Examination reform at 16+**

One of the most notable attempts at reforming French education in recent decades was that of René Haby in the mid-seventies when he was
Minister of Education. With the explicit support of the Giscardian government, Haby's measures, in keeping with the prevailing educational ideology, were designed to make the education system more democratic and egalitarian and less explicitly, to go some way towards reconciling this ideology with a modern economy's demand for differentially-trained, vocationally-oriented, school-leavers.

Previously, in direct contradiction with the strong nineteenth century republican tradition of 'égalité', the French education system had been dominated by selection hurdles - 'les compositions', 'les devoirs mensuels surveillés', determining progress - or lack of it - from year to year and the phenomenon of 'le redoublement' - repeating the year; examinations for selection for various kinds of secondary schooling; and a range of formal, exam-based qualifications. Over the last fifteen years, this traditional pattern has been overtaken, as in many other countries, by an apparently strong political commitment to egalitarianism which has resulted in the institution of comprehensive schooling up to sixteen (1a collège) now with mixed-ability teaching in the first four years of secondary education (since October 1980) and movements towards a common curriculum now even at lycée (post 16) level.

The need for change as a result of the pressures for greater opportunity and the disaffection caused by early failure in selection hurdles is well-described by Fraser (1971):

"a system that depends upon impersonal assessment of achievement, that has only recently introduced more personal and continuous evaluation; that needs to 'mark' precisely and that must therefore set a syllabus and questions that can be reduced to measurable data. The curriculum is taught abstractedly, verbally, precisely. The machinery of examinations needs constant maintenance and minor adjustment; but seems not to be able to cope with the pressures of large numbers of aspiring, articulate students, conscious of their power" (p. 167).

What has evolved to try to meet the dual need for more relevant
curriculum content and for some means of controlling 'bottom-up' pressure from the inevitable disaffection caused by too many aspiring students is an assessment procedure which provides for a very gradual 'cooling-out' kind of selection (Clark, 1962, 1982). This return to what is essentially an up-dated version of the traditional 'sponsored mobility' (Turner, 1960) approach provided for by selective schooling is highly significant for pupils but it is also significant in substantially adding to teachers' power. As one teacher suggested, "French education is centred on the syllabus whereas the English is centred on exams. Assessment is an integral part of the French system but the English works better ... we are now trying to make the French more informal ...". The form this increasingly 'informal' assessment is taking is that of 'orientation'.

Given the widespread assumption (if not the reality) among policy-makers and public alike of tight central control of curriculum and pedagogy and the removal, with comprehensive educational provision, of the necessity for formal selection hurdles, it was relatively easy to abolish the traditional apparatus of regular tests and formal public examinations during the course of compulsory schooling. Thus not only were pupils no longer subjected to regular, formal class tests, the 16+ examination, 'the Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle' was itself transformed from a pass/fail selection device to a teacher-assessed award based on an average of class marks and achieved by the majority of pupils (Dundas-Grant, 1975). Although some pupils can and do still opt to take the 'Brevet des Collèges' as an examination - either because they dispute the continuous assessment or need it for some special purpose - for the majority 'failure' is at least nominally, a thing of the past.

The prevailing rationale is well expressed by René Haby's successor as Minister of Éducation, Christian Beullac, and is reminiscent
of the English 1944 Education Act, that no educational path should represent failure, the paths being rather equal but different:

"What must be avoided above all is 'orientation' by failure ... No career should be seen as failure, but there are careers which correspond with diverse dispositions ... moreover orientation cannot be the product of the school alone. It must be the result of a collaboration between, first and foremost, the children concerned, the parents who are responsible for them, and the school." 39

The idea of orientation originally dates back to Jean Zay's plan in 1937 in which he appeased the powerful egalitarian interests which had been growing since the end of the First World War 40 by instituting experimental 'classes d'orientation' in which pupils would be directed to 'classical', 'modern' and 'technical' streams in the first two years of secondary education during which time they could be observed and re-directed as appropriate. As in England, the prevailing assumption at this time of fixed and innate capabilities provided a rationale for a continuing process of educational sorting whilst allowing the abolition of what was clearly a formally divisive system. It was not until the Pouchet reforms of 1959 however that this idea was actually put into practice in the division, in 1963, of the junior secondary college curriculum into an initial two year 'cycle d'observation' and a subsequent two year 'cycle d'orientation' (Pautler, 1981a),

"during the first cycle of secondary education, senior teachers and educational guidance specialists are required to take account of the pupils' abilities - to map out each pupil's academic career in the context of the class he attends, the whole group of classes existing at the same level, and the resources of the school, college district or educational administrative area" (OECD, 1970, p. 41).

Since in practice pupils tended to continue in the stream (filières) in which they were initially put, this reform did little to increase opportunity or reduce disaffection in the lower streams. It only justified the vain attempt to make all three streams follow a common
syllabus. In practice 'C' stream pupils were so frequently required to repeat the year's work, they had little hope of ever 'catching up'.

Building on plans and consultations begun during the Pompidou presidency under Minister of Education, Joseph Fontanet (Duclaud-Williams, 1982), Haby proposed a much more subtle solution to the problem. Such streaming was to be replaced by mixed ability classes pursuing a common core curriculum with continuous, individual pupil orientation linked to the new structure of collaborative, democratic councils involving the whole range of participants in the educational process and, not least, pupils and parents. Thus part of Haby's reform included a proposal for 'orientation' to be based on group recommendation - in which the vagaries of individual teachers (and hence the exposure of individual teachers to excessive pressures) would be guarded against by 'orientation' based on the 'conseil d'orientation' which would discuss with the pupil and responsible personnel the recommendations of the 'conseil des professeurs'. This procedure requires that throughout a pupil's school life vocational guidance is to be based on continuous observation by his teachers, recorded in a cumulative dossier. Regular meetings are to be held between the teachers, a guidance counsellor (conseiller d'orientation), a school doctor and psychologist, and representatives of parents. Such meetings are to be held every year, with two major ones taking place at the end of the second and last years at collège, when decisions must be made on the basis of the 'dossier' as to the type of studies the pupil will subsequently undertake.

During the Spring term before these meetings, the parents are invited to express their wishes concerning the guidance of the child; taking account of these wishes the council draws up and submits to the parents a proposed programme of future studies or training for their
child. The parents' final views are considered by the guidance council which sits during the summer term; it includes the head and several other teachers, one of whom is the child's class teacher, a doctor, school social welfare officer and guidance counsellor.

When the parents feel the decision of the guidance council is unacceptable an appeal committee, including the 'inspecteur d'académie' examines the case. If their advice still differs from the parents' wishes an examination is set for the child and the results assessed by a committee external to the college. Despite the rhetoric of partnership, however, in reality it is teachers who play the determining role in pupil orientation through their classwork assessments, the recommendations of the Conseil de Classe and the powerful Conseil des Professeurs. 43

Thus the 'orientation' procedure appears to solve the dual problems of selection and the control of pupil and parental frustration at a time when public opinion is still strongly egalitarian and democratic. The reality of this trend is, however, rather different. It is not simply that, as we know well in Britain, 'equal but different' is at best a naïve hope, but more that this form of allocation to variable opportunities is a much more pervasive and insidious form of social engineering and control than overt selection (see also Ranson, 1984). If formal examinations are arbitrary and unreliable the results are at least open to debate since all parties are aware that both pupil and examiner are bringing to bear their subjective personal perspectives. Orientation is based on the idea of a norm. It is a measure of conformity to this norm as adjudicated by a corporate decision which, if it prevents the operation of individual prejudice, nevertheless disguises value judgement under a bland, objective, technocratic facade in which the individual is powerless to challenge the norm. 44 Given the immense amount of evidence available of the bias, particularly class bias, inherent in teachers' assessment of
their pupils, the 'orientation' movement is likely to provide a new and increasingly rigorous basis for the identification of an elite since orientation towards vocational education is six times more frequent among the working class.46

At the same time it is likely to ensure, too, a relatively novel way of making central control a reality through the national provision of detailed curricular objectives which are thus translated into evaluation criteria. The co-existence of this trend with an already centralised system is doubly significant in the contemporary utilitarian climate, in that tracks or orientations which correspond most to society's current economic needs can receive most emphasis; the number of places available in each type of course can thus be determined on a sort of 'numerus clausus' idea, this restriction of opportunity being arguably a good deal more significant than the actual content of such courses. This is explicitly recognised in the 1983 Prost Report.

"In the first place, the criteria chosen are uniform. Orientation rarely takes into account pupils' centres of interest and the diversity of their aptitudes. The two major criteria are their results in mathematics and their age (as we have already indicated). In second place, orientation is frequently transformed into a procedure of practicality. Pupils must be divided up between the sections that exist, according to the space available in different establishments. This bureaucratic procedure, together with the rigidity of the learning programme, engenders in families a feeling of helplessness in the face of a blind technostructure. In the third place, it [orientation] constitutes a vast fragmented distillation which divides up pupils between streams which are strongly bounded and hierarchic as a function of dominant social models: supremacy of training in abstract science, less consideration for technical and professional training ..." (p. 134).

Thus although "the principle of 'orientation' is at the heart of all the reforms of education carried out since 1959 by the Vth Republic" (Rothera, 1968), and although "left-dominated teachers' unions have officially been in favour of greater equality, particularly since the
influx of young teachers after 1968, they have fought tooth and nail against the proposals" (Stevens, 1980) as they have against the similarly-inspired institution of a common-core syllabus and mixed ability classes.

Some of this hostility is simply resistance to the practical problems posed by the new procedures. Many teachers resent the additional burden it places on them and their exposure to criticism as well as their almost total lack of preparation and training for this task. Not surprisingly the result has been that many dossiers are not filled in with more than rudimentary information and the single 'conseiller d'orientation' in a college has neither the time nor the information to give a considered response to each child. The 'orientation' is thus as often as not merely the recognition of a choice already made, often by default.

As well as these 'professional' misgivings is the profound hostility felt by many radical groups such as the left-wing 'École et Famille' pressure group whose opposition was one of the main reasons for the government having to back down on the issue of computerising the dossiers.

Such groups interpret the Ministry rhetoric:

"For the whole of his school life he will be the object of continuous assessment on the part of his educators which will allow teaching to be better adapted to his needs, will help him to know himself and to prepare well for his future school and professional career choice" (ONISEP, 1979, p. 10),

not as benign diagnostic assessment and educational guidance but as a source of social control. Not only is 'assessment' a finer means of judgement than exams, "Orientation is submitted to, not chosen". The individual is powerless to resist the identification which is the end product of a continuous and benign surveillance.

There is too a gap between law and reality over the notion of choice of educational paths since future orientation tends to be predicted by
primary schooling, by social group and by teachers' decisions. In some rural areas too, organisational factors further limit the potential choice. As Herzlich (1980) suggests:

"Thus, for the most part, orientation functions as a mechanism of successive exclusions to the detriment of less favoured social groups ... one says what one wants: they say if one can ..."51

or, as the Le Grand Report puts it, 'être orienté' now means to be put into a 'short' (i.e. less prestigious) cycle and a lycée d'enseignement professionnel for vocational training. It is rooted in failure rather than success and its image is of arbitrary manipulation (p. 135). Thus many such youngsters are 'cooled out' before they reach the stage of any public examination, 52 and many more, it is argued, are forced to make career decisions before they feel able to decide. Great reliance is placed on the results of 'objective' tests at the end of troisième (the end of the compulsory stage of schooling) which, when combined in the dossier with the orientation counsellor's report, provides the principal basis for subsequent educational and career choice despite what research has revealed to be their low predictive power. 53 Those who choose and are chosen to continue in the formal school system by entering the 'classes de seconde' of a lycée are accompanied by their 'dossier scolaire' which continues to play an important role in determining the choice of Baccalauréat option available and, in many cases, eventual selection for a particular course of higher education.

The long-term significance of an assessment system in which the arbitrary power of the individual teacher is replaced by the benign and scientific efficiency of an impersonal norm which is simply operated by teachers has yet to be understood or even recognised. 54 Berger 55 suggests that in French education 'control' - assessment based on impersonal norms - is replacing 'evaluation' - the personal assessment of an individual's
value. Furthermore, he suggests that the growth of 'orientation' as the dominant vehicle of that 'control' is part of a more general movement towards 'corporate management' in education in which the traditional, personal authority of local officials, inspectors and teachers is being replaced by the impersonal regulation of statutory obligations and mechanised administration.

Crucial to this development is a computer-based facility for collecting and coordinating a whole range of information about the functioning of the education system on a national basis. Thus, if 'orientation' is part of a policy of 'democratisation', it is also, and more significantly, closely connected with this 'rationalisation' of educational administration and hence control.

"Orientation leads almost inevitably to computer-based administration". If continuous assessment in relation to detailed, nationally prescribed norms of performance eliminates the injustices of the caprice of an individual teacher and the variations in the exam papers set by the various Départements, it is by the same token more irresistible. Moreover, it is also a means of making a practical reality of the tradition of imposing curricular and pedagogic norms which was hitherto the responsibility of the inspector and thus represents a shift from 'process' to 'product' evaluation.

Thus, the assessment 'dossier' - the elaborate profile which follows a pupil throughout his or her school career - combined with a series of 'orientation' decisions taken by a pupil's teachers in the periodic meetings of the Conseil de Classe, carries into the classroom the same assumptions of scientific rationality which characterise all aspects of corporate management. That is to say that the norms of performance chosen are taken to be in some sense absolute and given the pseudo-legitimacy of science and not the values of a particular group and time. As authority
within the education system is thereby dispersed, control becomes a composite and increasingly impersonal phenomenon, impossible to pin down and hence to resist. If what is to be taught to whom, when, how and why, can only be answered by reference to particular values, disguising such pedagogical and curricular decisions under the cloak of an apparently objective, scientific assessment is perhaps the most effective form of educational (and thus social?) control yet developed. Thus where traditionally assessment represented the personal and possibly arbitrary judgement of an individual, it now tends to disguise both these under an appearance of conformity with rational norms. When the then Minister of Education, M. Haby, instituted the computerisation of pupils' dossiers as part of his major reform of the education system in 1975, there was sufficient public outcry for this practice to be abolished shortly afterwards. But although there was public disquiet at this very obvious step towards 'l'informatisation', the potential significance of the power of continuous cumulative group assessment to provide for both 'process-evaluation' based control of curriculum and pedagogy (by the central prescription of objectives) and the 'product-evaluation' of pupil performance is not yet generally perceived. This itself further enhances that potential. The 1982 Le Grand Report drew attention to some of the problems with orientation for example, pupils' lack of self-knowledge and of the range of possible employment opportunities which, Le Grand suggests, often makes it difficult for pupils to choose the most suitable career path even where appropriate provision for this exists, which is itself relatively rare. The Report urges the introduction of a personal 'tutorial' system in the collège which can take over the existing guidance function of orientation, confining the latter to a single summative evaluation at the end of 'troisième'. This certificate is the statement, in the form of a profile, of the objectives achieved by the pupil. It is
Although this proposal has provoked considerable opposition amongst teachers in particular and thus is unlikely to be implemented, it does suggest that French educational thinking is currently moving in a very similar direction to that in England in giving increased emphasis to pastoral care and pupil-teacher dialogue in 'formative' evaluation which culminates at the point of school-leaving, in a positive, summative 'profile' report which provides a comprehensive statement of the pupil's school achievements. It is too early to predict what the effect of such a move might be, but previous experience suggests that however disguised, the use of school qualifications for selection will still create a sense of failure for many pupils with all the problems that this causes.

Nevertheless, the 'orientation' procedure neatly solves several problems at once. First it provides a means of selection and of controlling pupil and parent frustration at a time when public opinion is still strong egalitarian and democratic. Secondly, it provides for greater 'product evaluation' control of teachers by clearing away some of the traditional assessment bureaucracy and making teachers directly and visibly responsible for their actions. Thirdly, it allows for a more technocratic, depersonalised approach to educational administration and more efficient 'process evaluation'. Fourthly, it provides for the most effective sort of assessment control of teachers - a combination of 'process' and 'product' evaluation in which the central prescription of curriculum norms is linked to the formal processes of pupil assessment.

For teachers, the effect of these four, closely interrelated processes which nominally increase their power is likely to be the removal of much of the traditional impotency of central government whilst giving them a quite new vulnerability to consumer pressure. Teachers in France are thus likely to find themselves moving steadily nearer the top of the
vertical axis in Figure 4.2 (Chapter Four), becoming increasingly more like their English colleagues than hitherto. The significance of these changes is taken up in more detail in Chapter Seven.

Public Examinations and Selection for Higher Education: The Baccalauréat

The explicit policy commitment to wider, more vocationally-oriented provision which has characterised French educational policy in the last two decades has resulted in major changes in both school and higher education organisation. These changes, I have suggested, are reflected in changing assessment policies and practices, most notably in the progressive devaluation of formal public examinations in favour of the use of certification and selection based on teachers' assessments in the form of school records. So far the post 16 lycées, in which students study for the Baccalauréat examination, have been, officially at least, largely untouched by these movements except for the significant increase in the numbers of pupils now attending them. Yet, given that the Baccalauréat exam automatically provides the matriculation requirement for university entrance, universities would have gradually become overwhelmed with applications without some means of selection in addition to the attestation of a particular standard as provided by the Baccalauréat. In 1900, for example, only 10% of young people obtained the Bac II or its equivalent - some 5,717 people. In 1976, by contrast, the number was between 35 and 40% - 204,480. Numbers in higher education have increased proportionally. Where there were 20,000 students in higher education in the 1950s, in 1981 there were approximately one million. At the same time the level and number of entrants to the pinnacles of the education system - the Grandes Écoles - has hardly increased so that whereas the proportion of 'top places' to candidates was 1 in 20 in 1900,
in 1985 it is likely to be 1 in 1,200.

The increasing over-subscription to university has mainly been controlled by selective examinations during the higher education stage itself, and the creation of alternative Instituts Universitaires Techniques (IUT), which, like the polytechnics in England, have prevented a dangerous build-up of excessive competition without threatening the traditional bases for high status. In addition, the 'cooling out' process based on a programme of monthly gradings and yearly promotion tests have resulted in a considerable number of pupils being subjected to 'redoublement' so that only those reaching the required standard have been able to aspire to study for the Baccalauréat. But one effect of the increasing democratisation of secondary education has been to increase the numbers of pupils in the lycées (now confined to the post sixteen, Baccalauréat-preparation stage). There are now signs of increasing pressure for a greater measure of democratisation at this stage of schooling also and, in particular, reform of the Baccalauréat. There is considerable government concern about the over-academic nature of many of the specialisms pursued and the over-recruitment to particular prestige subject areas which has little to do with future career intentions. Associated with this is increasing public concern over the declining market value of the Baccalauréat overall.

Recent attempts to reform the Baccalauréat examination to bring it more in line with the reality of mass secondary education date back to the Fouchet reforms of 1963 which attempted to break the hold of the university professors who had been given control of the Baccalauréat and hence considerable influence over the secondary school curriculum in the 1950s. (Goblot, 1967). Fouchet introduced a programme of 'modernisation from above' in which an element of 'streaming' in secondary and higher education would differentiate between an upper stratum of modern
PAGINATION AS IN ORIGINAL
professionals and a middle stratum of educated semi-professionals - the bulk of Baccalauréat holders. From this reform developed one of the most significant trends affecting the Baccalauréat in the last two decades - its increasing differentiation into subject specialisms of different status.

To try to overcome this problem Haby proposed as part of his reforms a scheme for postponing specialisation in the Baccalauréat. His idea was to return to the traditional model of a two part Baccalauréat, the first, more general part to be taken at the end of the second year in the lycée and the second part at the end of the third and final year during which students would be more specialist, studying only four subjects, three in depth. The intention was to encourage higher education institutions to require passes in particular subjects and so broaden the number of desirable Baccalauréat specialisms, emphasising content rather than status in the subjects pursued as the important criterion for selection.

Although Haby himself was not able to introduce such a policy, the need for reform was such that 1981 saw some of Haby's ideas being implemented in the institution of a 'common core' in the first year of lycée study so that students can have a more broadly based course of study and keep their options open. Also higher education institutions are being encouraged to value other Baccalauréats than the Baccalauréat 'C'. Explicit efforts have been made to raise the status of technical studies in particular, first by the institution in 1966 of the Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie and, in 1971, of the Maîtrise de Science et de Technologie; and finally, in 1977, by opening access to the Grandes Écoles to holders of the Technical Baccalauréat (Pautler, 1981b).

Whilst these policies to 'vocationalise' the Baccalauréat seem to be bearing some fruit, the more general problem of the devaluation of the
'Bac' as a qualification remains. To a considerable extent this problem arises from the 'democratisation' of upper secondary and higher education.

Thus although the official standing of the Baccalauréat has not changed since the decree of March 17th, 1808, which gave Baccalauréat holders the right of admission to higher education, in practice the possession of the certificate per se no longer guarantees the holder the free choice of subject specialism in higher education to which he or she is nominally still entitled. Apart from the fact that some universities and the very popular University Institutes of Technology have the right to dispense with the Baccalauréat entirely, increasing pressure of numbers has led many other facultés to discriminate more or less overtly on the basis of the Baccalauréat specialism pursued and the candidate's school record (Pautler, 1981b). Whether a student opts for one of the five subject areas of the 'General' Baccalauréat, literature (A), economics and social studies (B), mathematics and physical sciences (C), mathematics with biological sciences (D), and mathematics with technology (E), or one of the three 'technical Baccalauréats' covering industrial studies, social and medical sciences and music and dance (F), mathematically-based economics (G) and computer science (H), tends to determine whether he or she pursues a 'long course' of higher education in the university or a short, more applied higher education in some form of technical institute.

More important is the relative status ranking between subjects, and, in particular, the prestige of option 'C' (mathematics and physical sciences), the only specialisation which still allows successful students access to the whole range of disciplines in higher education. Not surprisingly, there is considerable competition within lycées to be allowed to take the Baccalaureat 'C' option and many students will repeat a year in order to achieve this, particularly given the increasing
tendency for universities to follow the Grandes Écoles and the IUTs in selecting on entry. Hitherto, the practice has been to allow open access and then to fail students either in the Propédeutique examination at the end of the first year, or at the stage of the Diplôme d'Études Universitaires Générales (DEUG) after two years which may be obtained by only 20-25% of students. In some faculties, weeding out may be postponed until graduation stage itself. Universities have been increasingly losing status as a result of a growing increase in the number of unemployed graduates since such unemployment is attributed to the universities not being sufficiently selective and not offering useful courses rather than to the state of the job market as a whole. These sorts of criticism have been a major cause of the increasing tendency to select students on entry rather than at graduation. In many popular faculties such as medicine and pharmacy the necessity of a 'numerus clausus' policy has strengthened the faculties' hand in this respect.

It is also clearly one of the reasons behind the re-establishment of central government control of the content and grading of national diplomas.

An important effect of this trend towards initial selection in all the prestigious branches of higher education has been to increase teachers' power in a number of ways. The decline in value of the Baccalauréat which has been associated with its "quantitative democratisation" and "qualitative differentiation" (Rothera, 1968) has given teachers an increasingly important role in 'guiding' students into the different options. In addition, the devaluation of the Baccalauréat has led to an associated increase in the importance of the marks obtained in the last two years of upper secondary education and, in particular, the 'dossier scolaire' based on the continuous assessment of teachers.

Recognising this and wanting to give it official expression, Haby wanted as part of his reform to limit the formal Baccalauréat examination
to borderline candidates only by 1982 as in the Brevet des Collèges since, as he expressed it,

"a certificate [of secondary education] should be awarded on the basis of continuous assessment of knowledge and abilities rather than on the traditional one to three day examination" (Haby, 1974)

This proposal was vetoed by Haby's successor, Christian Beullac, and came to nothing. 68

Yet Jessel (1980) reports the results of a poll which purports to show 75% of adults would prefer continuous assessment in the last three years of school. Few thought the Baccalauréat would be useful for getting a job and although 84% thought it was useful for getting into higher education, they thought it had little value in itself. Similarly, 'Le Monde de l'Éducation', March 1980, carried an article entitled 'Bac Impopulaire', citing the views of a wide range of educational pressure groups. This report showed even the traditionalist Union Nationale des Parents d'Élèves de l'Enseignement Privé as being in favour of continuous assessment and, more radically, those of Henri Lefebyre, President of the Union Nationale des Associations de Parents d'Élèves de l'Enseignement Libre, who argues that such reform is needed to allow all pupils to be fulfilled. Surprisingly enough even Guy Bayet representing the highest and hence most conservative stratum of the teaching profession - the Société des Agrégés - expressed his organisation to be in favour of the Haby proposals for Baccalauréat reform. Many teachers deplore the existence of crammers, specialising in Baccalauréat preparation - 'les boîtes à bachot' - and the associated practice of 'bachotage'. 69 They argue that pupils who have never faced a formal public examination before are subjected to enormous tension. Several teachers suggested in interview that the lack of marketability of the Baccalauréat often came as a surprise and consequent let-down to youngsters reaching this stage
of their education.

In addition, there is public recognition that

"when, the following year, they [the question papers] are published, every teacher tries them or makes their pupils try them" (Le Courier, 1979). This to the extent that examination questions virtually become the syllabus.

Concern for reform comes too from the recognition of significant regional variations in Baccalauréat standard, a problem made more acute since 1966 when the responsibility for the Baccalauréat examination was entirely devolved to the Recteur d'Académie. Now in each académie there is an elaborate committee structure, a small permanent staff who, with the aid of a computer, must set and mark over a hundred different examination papers for something approaching a million candidates.

The result, as Reuchlin and Bacher (1968) suggested some time ago is that almost inevitably

"it is sadly to be feared that the differences observed between examiners may not be entirely explicable by the characteristics of the examination situation".

It is also not surprising that many senior educationists and administrators are in favour of the abolition of public examinations on the grounds of cost and teacher-time alone.

Paradoxically, however, despite this very widespread dissatisfaction with the Baccalauréat, very few would actually abolish it. Several commentators explain this phenomenon in terms of the 'esprit Carthesian', the national myth that the Baccalauréat preserves academic excellence and equality of opportunity. Certainly there are government fears that curriculum standards might be put in jeopardy without it, particularly since the alternative proposal of a separate university entrance examination has so far come to nothing. In view of the Prost Report's failure to grasp this particular nettle, and M. Savary's acceptance of their proposal to
reform, rather than rescind the Baccalauréat (see page 223 of this chapter), it is unlikely that there will be any radical change in this respect in the near future. 77

There is considerable evidence too that many teachers and parents fear the personal consequences which may result from the abolition of external examinations. 78 Many parents still cling to the security of the public examination and Legrand (1977) suggests that far from there being a reduction in formal assessment at the present time, there is currently an incredible proliferation as new modes of assessment are introduced and the old retained.

These sorts of debates between the necessity for public examinations in order to maintain national standards, syllabus coverage and a fair basis for selection as against their undesirable effects on learning and the problems of comparability are not confined to France but are equally familiar in England - and indeed other countries. The significant difference between France and England is rather the standing of the qualification itself. Whereas, the tendency in England in recent years has been for public concern over educational standards and unemployment to manifest itself in, if anything, more support for formal public tests and examinations, in France the situation is exactly the opposite. The increasing tendency for the elite institutions of higher education to base their judgements on school records and for teachers to regulate the key points of selection between nominally equal courses and orientations which in practice vary enormously in their prospects, has paved the way for continuous assessment to assume a more explicit role even at Baccalauréat level. The spirit of this movement closely resembles that informing changes during the compulsory stage of schooling in its emphasis on pupil guidance. Once again, the assumption is that if pupils have more knowledge about the opportunities
available and of their own strengths and weaknesses, they will be able to make a positive and suitable educational and career choice, all such choices being equally desirable, despite the very evident disparities in status and prospects. The evidence suggests that popular opinion has not been taken in by the 'orientation' rhetoric, that parents still recognise some 'orientations' as 'echecs' (failures) and that, as Pautler (1981b) expressed it in rather a nice understatement,

"it would, of course, be somewhat exaggerated to talk about a deliberate guidance policy since the students' subject choice is largely influenced by selection in secondary education."

Arguably, then, 'orientation' is a euphemism which is equivalent to the rhetoric of 'choice', the meaning of which is already familiar in educational discourse; for the lower achievers there is often no choice.

Contemporary policy developments in French education concerning the assessment of individuals thus provide a very good example of the general trends identified in Chapter Two. The postponement of selection, the comprehensivisation of assessment and the increasing delegation of responsibility to teachers are central themes at the present time. In Chapter Two it was argued that the principal cause of such developments is changes in the social and economic context which have given rise to the need for new legitimating ideologies which will justify selection and hence provide for both individual and systemic control. Thus for the individual, the legitimating ideology of equality of opportunity and fair competition is being replaced by a new legitimating ideology of positive choice in which, rather than being competitors for selection, individuals are 'helped' to choose what the school decides is in their best interest. The difficulty of refuting such well-meaning advice in practice or of criticising the assumptions on which it is founded makes this a very powerful basis for control. The second part of this chapter,
which now follows, explores how this same ideology is currently replacing the more traditional bases of control at systemic level.

Assessment and System Control

Central Control

From the earliest days of the nineteenth century, French educational provision was recognisably a system. In particular the early establishment of a range of national qualifications was significant in making a reality of one of the major principles of the Université — supreme central control. The decree of 1808 stated that no-one could teach without a qualification from the université or without being a member or graduate of one of its faculties. No other institution could deliver valid diplomas since 'diplômes réservées à l'État' was one of the 'grands principes' of French education.

Until well into this century, the Baccalauréat performed the dual functions of maintaining the social bias of the education system in favour of the bourgeoisie (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1976) and of preserving the ideal of equality in education by subjecting all candidates to a common educational experience (Rothera, 1968), a communality that was only made a reality in practice, given the size and complexity of the educational system, by the existence of national examinations, despite the provision of detailed curricular objectives (Fraser, 1963; Anderson, 1975). Armytage (1968) goes as far as to argue that an examination as uniform as the Baccalauréat was only possible in a highly centralised system.

In higher education, too, although it enjoyed considerably more curricular freedom, the same assumption that national certificates were necessary to ensure national equality of provision has traditionally been in evidence:
"The French, it has often been noted, have a passion for diplomas and equality; they believe that the former, because it is awarded according to uniform rules, ensure the latter" (Patterson, 1972).

Historically, despite radically different administrative traditions and associated ideologies, public examinations have played a surprisingly similar role in France and England as a means of ensuring a considerable degree of national homogeneity in educational standards and practice. In both countries too, public examinations have been of central importance in legitimating the pre-eminent position of a liberal-classical, academic curriculum (Eggleston, 1984); and in regulating access to different levels of employment.

In reality, of course, the schools were not the same either geographically or socially. Differences between one lycée and the next, and especially those lycées which had the best 'classes préparatoires' for the post Baccalauréat entrance exam for the Grandes Écoles, were marked. If "monopoly was the first law of the system" (Crozier, 1970), of its rhetoric and its organisation, it cannot be taken from this that uniformity of practice ensued as a result or that where uniformity was apparent, this was its source. If there was "a grotesque uniformity" (Aron, 1969) this is more likely to have been the result of the common educational experience of teachers and administrators (Aristide and Zolberg, 1971), the importance of which was clearly recognised by Napoleon in the emphasis he placed on teacher-training. Secondly, the persistently marginal economic and social status of most teachers (except for some highly-qualified lycée professeurs) was probably also an incentive for them to look to the state system as the basis of identity and support. But it was arguably the state monopoly over public examinations and certification that was most instrumental to the maintenance of homogeneity (Patterson, 1972) as indeed it was explicitly intended to be, for such a monopoly could readily
be justified in the enduring French passion for diplomas as a reflection of meritocratic equality.

The French education system today is "still recognisably that which we inherited from Napoleon" (Instituteur, Calvados). Its extreme centralisation is criticised for inhibiting local innovation by fostering a fear of failure and institutional irresponsibility and inertia. There is criticism of the sterile, abstract, class-biased nature of many subjects and the lack of local relevance in the curriculum. Above all, centralisation is blamed for the enduring and often ill-founded respect for a hierarchy based on seniority and qualifications.

But perhaps the most significant, if least apparent, effect is the gap between theory and practice in the operation of the education system and the lack of accountability and control which teachers enjoy in practice. Although planning may be 'rational', decision-making frequently is not. In the words of one teacher, "We're like a factory and from this vantage point it's difficult to distinguish the intentions of the system from what happens by accident - we only see the results". There is an inevitable compromise between "the ideal and the practicable" (Fraser, 1963) which, as Balzac noted some long time ago, "puisque événements nous dépassent, feignons d'en être l'organisateur".

The more sensitive academic and professional commentaries recognise this illusion of centralisation for what it is (Fraser, 1963; Anderson, 1975):

"The schools might once have been expected to study the same Latin passage at the same time, in every classroom throughout the country, but in practice there was infinite variation created by the eccentricities of the teachers and the pressures of local conditions. Centralisation gave them status; but human weakness made them what they were. No ministerial order could be enforced until it had travelled through the hierarchy; but officials, headmasters and teachers often hated, despised or feared each other, and these animosities stirred up resistance which could completely transform the spirit in which the orders were applied" (Zeldin, 1971, p. 271).
"The state found that, with the school system, it had brought into being a monster it could not control. The schools developed values of their own, which were not in harmony with those of society at large. They preached admiration of the great minds of the past and rejected the commercial, industrial world as corrupting and base. Like the church, they saw their role as the protection of children against adult temptations; they felt unappreciated and therefore fell on the defensive. Like the bureaucracy, they did not just serve the state but made their own preservation and expansion a primary goal. They were moreover divided amongst themselves and so instead of producing pupils with equal chances in life or ones who accepted the same values, they created a series of elites, separating secondary and primary pupils into two distinct worlds" (Zeldin, 1971, p. 1161).

The homogeneity inherent in the bureaucratic, financial and administrative provision of education could not, of itself, ensure an equivalent homogeneity of practice. The provision of detailed performance criteria of the expected outcomes of each stage of schooling, the close control of educational publishing (Becher and Maclure, 1978), the central provision of detailed timetables and syllabuses and manuals on pedagogy do not of themselves represent control. The system of inspection on which depends teachers' promotion provides a good example of the difference between theory and practice, since regardless of the assessment, all teachers will progress, more or less quickly, to the maximum salary point their qualifications allow, and only extreme moral corruption can overcome their security of employment as civil servants. The control exerted by an inspector who can only possibly visit once every three years and often less cannot be significant in practice. Hence Latourte could write in 1961, "One is no longer in the country of Descartes, one is nearer to the pragmatism of the English". Or, as de Perriti (1979) has it:

"The application of identical rules at identical levels (between academies, departments, institutions) supports the illusion of equality of treatment at a time when very great heterogeneity whether of initial differences, whether simply the size of each of these things would require adaptations in the light of an in-depth study of such differences" 83

To these structural and political factors are added linked
technical problems "if the immensity and the inertia of the education system provides a measure of stability ... they also bring with them a considerable slowing down of the diffusion of innovation, whatever the size of the resources provided ... it cannot be simply a question of a proportional reduction of national problems to the local level". 84

These quotations imply that central control in its pure sense is and always has been a logical impossibility given that the chain of command involves a whole series of personal interpretations, mediations, actions and relations which will 'flesh' the bones of the original order. 85

Many French educational officials are aware that despite the theory of centralisation going back to Richlieu and Louis XIV, "the system is so centralised it doesn't control things very well". 86 Within the administrative bureaucracy itself there are "ways and means of following policy" ('Le façon de suivre les reformes'). 87 Some French educationists believe the French Minister of Education has little more power than his opposite number in Britain since "French central planning can influence everything except teachers" (Noel, 1972). "There is both the letter and the spirit of the syllabus". 88

The 'instructions ministerielles' give very precise suggestions on what and how to teach. In reality the true picture of teacher control is one in which teachers have far more autonomy over method than they do over content, in which they do not exercise all the freedom they potentially have but in which the extent that they do depends on their ideology, their personality and their definition of the needs of the particular children in their care and their school situation - A teacher may adopt Freinet methods in a one-teacher school for example, 89 but not where he must work with colleagues unless they all agree. Relatively few French teachers can even conceive of the possibility of no central syllabus, let alone seek it and many feel that there is now too much
curricular freedom.

The significance of the centralisation of French education rests not in its effect on practice as such, but in the fact that an instrumental order which should in theory be highly responsive to the demands of capital is constantly put at risk by the internal tensions so created. The necessity for practice to be directly responsive to both local and institutional needs and constraints conflicts with both the expressive and the instrumental ideology of bureaucratic standardisation prevalent in society as a whole. Centralisation in the French context may more realistically be taken as the point at which decisions are made - the formal accountability of the Minister of Education to Parliament for the functioning of the whole system (Halls, 1976) - than the degree of power any one such Minister as the head of the hierarchy can effectively exercise (Duclaud-Williams, 1980).

The ambiguity here is partly a result of the imprecision of the term centralisation. Brückman (1979) suggests that there is a need to study the actual distribution of power between hierarchical levels and whether centralisation applies equally at each level. Pressure for and against centralisation may not be uniform but vary according to the nature and implications of different decisional powers. Increasing decentralisation may not mean an equivalent decrease in central control as in a zero-sum equation.

As well as levels of control, it is necessary to distinguish vertically between the separate hierarchies of finance, organisation and educational content. Indeed the twin hierarchies of control over the content of education (la pédagogie et le contenu) and the administration of education (la gestion) are entirely separate below ministerial level, the Minister being the only 'colossus' with a foot in both camps. This distinction is recognised in one of the most recent ministerial
statements on autonomy which distinguishes between pedagogical autonomy, which appears to exist to a considerable extent already, autonomy of means - a measure of which is already being implemented financially - and administrative autonomy giving the school and the local authority greater power over such things such as staffing.91

A third related set of distinctions is that between 'decentralisation', 'deconcentration' and 'democratisation', where decentralisation is defined as ceding a greater degree of decision-making autonomy to the lower rungs of the bureaucracy, 'deconcentration' is defined as providing longer and more local 'arms' of the central bureaucracy and 'democratisation' is defined as the provision for more public knowledge, debate and influence at either local or national levels. But as a paper by Syndicat National d'Inspecteurs Départementaux de l'Éducation (SNIDEN) points out, not only is it difficult to separate the educational bureaucracy from more general government activity in this respect, it is tempting to confuse simple 'deconcentration' with real 'decentralisation'.92 The latter requires that each level of the system be protected from both too much central control and too much local interference, each level of the system being given power to decide educational priorities appropriate to that level. Thus at school level a representative council might decide objectives and syllabuses whereas the central authorities would decide overall curriculum objectives and available resources. (Rowbottom and Billis, 1977).

Over the last few decades there has been explicit central recognition of the reality of local variation and the need for an increasing 'souplesse' in administration and democratisation. As early as 1946, the Langevin-Wallon Commission recognised centralisation as a barrier to progress, as have many government statements since, notably the Sarraillh Commission of 1956. In 1957 a Ministry of Education paper stated:
"The present French education system and the ordering of its administration represents a compromise between the historical structure which still imposes its mould and its vocabulary and the new ordinance which social and economic evolution calls for but which the law has not yet consecrated" (quoted by Garrigue, 1980).

In practice, apparent moves to increase total control have been regarded by many as 'une grosse affaire',\(^\text{93}\) because no administrative machinery has been provided to make them a reality. The Recteur d'Académie, for example, himself a central, political appointee, has had no corresponding increase in autonomy to deal with those issues for which he is increasingly held responsible (Saint-Sernin, 1980). Indeed, one teacher suggested that "autonomy is a means of making us responsible for the economic crisis and financial malaise of the country".\(^\text{94}\) In fact, the movements towards decentralisation and deconcentration can actually be interpreted as an increase in central control in decongesting local administration by making local budgetary personnel - who are nevertheless in the direct control of the Ministry - more powerful. To the extent that autonomy exists, it is only in the form of - 'une souplesse' - of pedagogy, of administration with central prescription of curricula, of finance,\(^\text{95}\) of personnel and of policy - ensuring this flexibility is limited. As the traditional inefficiencies inherent in such multiple bureaucratic structures are increasingly overcome by 'deconcentration' and the application of information science and cybernetics, it seems that the traditional leeway that existed in practice may actually be decreasing, whilst ostensibly, grass-roots pressure for more local autonomy is meeting with a positive response.

Apparent significant changes in educational control in recent decades have included the setting up of new administrative and advisory councils at various levels of the system in which parents, teachers and communities frequently have a say.\(^\text{96}\) There has been greater commitment by government
to 'deconcentration' in decision-making and more 'grass-roots' innovation (Becher and Maclure, 1978). The official recognition that "situations vary a lot between one collège and another and what is valued here is not necessarily valued elsewhere" represents a fundamental change of ethos in the French education system.\(^97\)

Given at best half-hearted support for change among teachers,\(^98\) the public and possibly many administrators, a major source of these recent changes must be the growth in size of the French educational bureaucracy which has made a degree of deconcentration a practical necessity. Jessel (1980) describes the new devolution programme of Minister Pelletier, the aim of which is "to unblock a rigid system whose huge size has made it a monster and which centralism has made particularly difficult to reform". During the Fourth Republic (1944 to 1958) the Ministry of Education grew to be the largest national enterprise and now employs half of all civil servants and a quarter of the national budget. In 1973 France spent twice what the UK spent for each citizen on education. In 1976 the figure was 23.77% as opposed to 14.4% in the UK. In 1978 there were 957,072 teachers and officials whose activities cost 69,718.4 million francs - 17.5% of the state budget. Since the 1959 Loi Debré costs have escalated rapidly with the partial or total funding of private Catholic schools as the price of much closer control. In 1977 this charge was an extra 800 million francs.\(^99\) Thus the sheer size of the machine is an enormous administrative problem and one which grows bigger each year as the length and diversification of educational provision means more students and increasing difficulty in liaising between administrative and educational concerns (Sapin, 1980). To make it work, the system now requires 4,000 administrators in Paris and 20,000 nationally.\(^100\) Given that, in addition, the relative amount of money available for education over recent years has decreased at the very
time when it was most needed to boost public confidence in a system reeling from the effects of a major restructuring and it is not hard to divine the source of contemporary pressures for decentralisation.  

But the difficulty of reconciling the conflicting views which are virtually bound to be provoked by any proposed innovation has largely served to reinforce the inertia of central government in this respect, so that more often than not its search for compromise makes it a brake on any radical development. As in England this tendency is exacerbated at the present time by the current shortage of resources for education. This has been and remains one of the major impediments to making proposed innovations a reality. At the most obvious level these are 'platitudes without resources' but at a deeper level too, the anger of parents and teachers resulting from larger classes, fewer teaching jobs and poorer school conditions is manifest not only in frequent public demonstrations and strikes but also in a hostility towards new and extra demands and a general unwillingness to think positively about educational change. Many teachers and local officials see 'democratisation' as purely political rhetoric with no real growth in either equality or local power.

At a deeper level, however, there is a sense in which policy initiatives in French education are always 'à la marge', for even if government can succeed in pushing through legislation 'without waiting for the necessary consensus to develop' - which is necessarily rare given the strength, diversity and political nature of the national pressure groups which are themselves a product of centralisation - they must still change the attitudes of the teaching profession. The widely recognised failure of the theoretically unstreamed collèges is just one example of the difficulty of imposing innovation. Many commentators would agree with Sartre's assertion that "France is the true home of
humanism". "I conceive myself", Sartre wrote, "both as totally free and as unable to prevent the fact that the meaning of the world comes to it from myself" (Bree and Guiton, 1959, cited in Armytage, 1968).

In this respect, France is very different from England, where innovation necessarily begins with the premise that teachers must be convinced since they cannot be coerced. Again, unlike England, where the tradition of considerable local and institutional autonomy leaves considerable power and responsibility to senior school level management, schools in France are relatively free of internal bureaucratic control, their internal working being something of an oasis between "the hierarchy of horizontal layers insulated from each other" (Crozier, 1964, see also Pautler, 1981a), which is the central bureaucracy, and the freedom this nominal central control gives them from public accountability.

Traditionally the impossible rigidity of the central bureaucracy was overcome by informal strategies. Within the hierarchy of impersonal roles there existed a parallel network of informal personal connections (Brickman, 1979), which was "an 'oiling' of a rather rigid system" (Le Clerq, 1975).

Berger's experience in the French education system is referred to by Geminard (1979); he says he has learnt two things: "the first is that one can consider every educational situation as a system ... the second being exactly the opposite" (p. 10). Writing of their own situation at various levels of the bureaucracy, French administrators seem to agree on the considerable scope there is for the individual and particularly the 'chef d'établissement' to make his own decisions and developments (Crozier, 1980; Toussant, 1980; Gentzbitel, 1980). This is what Minot (1979) refers to as "le fait d'être maître de ses décisions dans le respect de la réglementation générale qui s'impose.
à tous ..." (p. 37). For administrators as for teachers, 'l'autonomie, c'est d'abord un état d'esprit' (p. 69).

Local Control

Thus, as far as education is concerned, it is hard to define the power of local authorities in France. There is considerable administrative responsibility for the allocation of centrally decided resources and for the general provision and maintenance of educational services. By contrast local authorities have virtually no say in the content of schooling in terms of curriculum, examinations, teacher training and the majority of staff appointments. Within these formal ordinances, however, power is very much a personal quality. Despite the nominally feeble power of the elected departmental councils (Conseils-Généraux), and those of the smallest administrative unit, the commune, in practice "their power of veto both formal and by studied inactivity seems to ensure exactly the same uneasy and creaking partnership between central and local government as we enjoy" suggests Turpie (1980, p. 24). If a complete and logical local government system was one of the legacies of the Revolution (Anderson, 1975), these formal arrangements are only a part of the subtle, ambiguous and, in particular, reciprocal dependence of the bureaucratic official on the Mayor and 'notables' he is supposed to govern and their ability to by-pass him (Sharpe, 1979).

What this balance of power means in practice thus depends upon inevitable personal variations and other variables in the policy-making process (Bolam, 1982). The important formal difference remains however that the French education system lacks the local political dimension, so significant in regulating provision in England. The Prefect is a central government political appointment roughly equivalent to the
Leader of the Council in England and the Recteur, equivalent to the Chief Education Officer - is also a central government appointment. Since accredited teachers are also centrally employed and appointed and since the experienced and well qualified have the most chance of choosing to which schools they will be appointed, there are many obstacles to either a chef d'établissement or a local authority building up that specifically local consciousness or institutional ethos which has been so much a feature in England. Wright (1979) suggests that because regional institutions are framed and function in a centralist mould, they are only palliatives to local democracy. This indeed is one of the strongest traditional distinctions between the two systems, the French against the inequalities that such freedom must allow, the English prepared to sacrifice formal equality for the benefits of individual vision and charisma.

The issue of innovation provides a good example of the ambiguous and often incestuous nature of French educational control and administration. Ministry documentation suggests that research and innovation is carefully planned and controlled, pilot exercises being evaluated prior to policy decisions being made with teachers not in the 'experimental' schools having little role to play (Sumner, 1977). One reason for teachers' reluctance to initiate or to respond to initiatives for change is this tradition of innovation which is centrally determined, an imposition on them for which they are not prepared ideologically or practically. The new 10-12 curriculum for example, was drawn up, like every other curriculum innovation, in the central Ministry with little or no consultation with either teachers directly or their representative unions. It was then presented to the profession as a 'fait accompli' (Noel, 1972). Once again, however, this formal and rhetorical picture disguises a reality in which the situation is much more open with the 'Centres de Recherche
et de Documentation Pédagogique" in each Académie playing an important responsive role to teacher developments and using their substantial budgets for simultaneous curriculum development and teacher training (Pratt, 1976).

This situation is well described by Bolam (1982) as follows: "In the centralised French system, innovations and reforms have been introduced compulsorily from the centre, sometimes preceded by experiment and teacher information and training and sometimes not. The possibility of locally initiated change also exists". Feneuille (1981) lists some of the problems of this dual approach:

"the overwhelming predominance of the centralised approach relegates the local to a marginal role. The centralised power-coercive approach has employed weak implementation strategies. The attitudes of teachers and parents are frequently inimical to the innovations; teachers and parents sometimes oppose innovations because of the politics of the national government rather than the features of the innovation. These problems and related ones have prompted the French government to reappraise its research and innovation policies and to study methods of decentralising such work" (p. 43).

A good example of this problem is provided in the recent radical reform of initial teacher education in France in which it is proposed that teachers be trained to adopt an 'action-research' mode in order to change schools from within. But as Feneuille (1981) suggests, "this objective is very far from being achieved or even put in hand as both teachers and administrators and educationists still stick to their traditional normative habits and models ..." (p. 9).

Teacher Accountability

Clearly the issue of central control and homogeneity of practice in French education is extremely complex, not to say confused. It is apparent that it can no longer be assumed, if it ever could, that every
pupil in 'sixième' will be studying the same page of the same text at the same hour. Indeed, in any country the classroom situation in which an individual teacher finds him or herself will be determined by the interaction of a number of consistent factors. These are likely to include the age, ability, previous experience and expectations of the particular group of pupils concerned. Also relevant is the physical layout of the classroom, the available resources and equipment, and the size of the class. The time of day and the length of lessons are significant features, as is the extent to which the teacher is free to determine his or her own pedagogy and curriculum content. Teachers are likely to experience various forms of influence and control and impose on themselves various definitions of 'moral' accountability - from training received, from colleagues, from the management hierarchy in the school, from advisers and inspectors, subject associations, examination syllabuses, from national pronouncements on priorities and desirable practice and from the local community, notably school governors - where they exist - parents and employers.

This constellation of influences will not be the same for any two teachers anywhere, but clearly one of the main sources of the similarities that do exist is their common situation within a particular national education system. Thus, the way in which the provision of education is organised in France including such things as school buildings and equipment, school curriculum provision, teacher-training and community participation will influence how teachers see their role. To this long, but by no means exhaustive, list must be added the more amorphous but very powerful influence of ideology and national educational tradition which gives rise in France, for example, to strong teacher support for centralised control as the basis for equality of opportunity and in England, by contrast, to strong teacher support for 'grass-roots' autonomy
in order that the maximum scope may be given to teachers' professional judgement. Thus for French teachers, unlike their English counterparts, their civil servant status leads them to a perception of their professional accountability and hence, their self-imposed control, which includes the national organisation in the person of the inspector, rather than to the school as an institution, the head and colleagues, although in both countries moral accountability to pupils figures strongly. Unlike English teachers too, French teachers' criteria for such professional accountability is more typically whether they have followed the centrally prescribed curriculum rather than, as for English teachers, what their pupils achieve.

But systematic similarity in the objective conditions which surround teaching or the subjective perspectives which condition it, may be swamped by variations in the personal characteristics of teachers in terms of, for example, career stage, age, sex, class background, geographical location, race or qualifications. It is quite possible to find nearly as much diversity between teachers within any one national education system as between teachers in different national education systems. One teacher in France may say,

"the teacher is absolutely free in his class ... it's the results that matter, not how they are achieved"
(primary school directrice, France)

or

"everybody teaches what he is in the final analysis"
(primary school teacher, France)

whereas, another, at a higher level, may say,

"a teacher in France has no right to teach according to his own ideas ...."
(Lycée teacher, France)

or

"a teacher is a civil servant and his job is to adapt to the level of his class what he has to teach them"
(former Lycée teacher, now in local administration of education)
The different levels of the teachers quoted above are significant, however. The potential freedom available to the high status lycée teacher with either Agrégation or Capes is likely to be greater than that available to the more humble instituteur whose work is closely supervised by the IDEN. On the other hand, since the learning of skills is gradually replaced by the learning of subject content as a pupil progresses through the school system, the instituteur has more pedagogic scope than her more senior colleagues. The extent to which any French teacher will seek to exploit the potential freedom however depends on personality and ideology. Many do not desire to depart from the security of detailed prescription. Those that do so wish must bear in mind that their colleagues are also a source of professional judgement. Indeed, the continual process of review and guidance of each individual pupil's progress which the principle of orientation requires has made teachers more exposed to such collegial judgement. Parental pressure and the cost of frequent changes of textbook are other sources of constraint. But whilst French and English teachers differ in their professional accountability - the former in terms of what has been covered, the latter in terms of what their pupils have achieved - it is for both of them their membership of a professional community which constitutes one of the most significant sources of control. But whereas English teachers must use a variety of strategies to legitimate their status against popular pressure at the present time for it to be restricted, the fact that professionalism for the French teacher involves civil servant status and a role in the central bureaucracy has traditionally allowed them considerable immunity from accountability based on 'product evaluation'.

According to the usual definitions of professionalism (see, for example, Hoyle, 1974), teachers are not a profession but a corporate
body trying to assert itself through "an act of self-mystification and delusion" in much the same way as in England. In France, however, teachers' ability to defend themselves from all kinds of non-professional interference is much greater than their English counterparts since their claim to professional status is arguably the formalised, contemporary, secular expression of their clerical predecessors right of immunity to canon law. Just as the church was accountable only to God, the teacher too is accountable only in professional terms. Although it has always been true in France as elsewhere, that "a school is judged by its exam results", individual teachers and schools who are assumed to be closely following central curriculum and pedagogic objectives, are not held accountable for these results in the way that they are in a system, such as the English, where there is almost total statutory freedom for schools themselves to determine what and how to teach.

Modes of Accountability

It is this context of centralised bureaucratic control and, perhaps more importantly, the ideology it reflects, which provides for a considerable consensus that accountability in French education is 'ante-hoc'. If in England, evaluation is principally applied to learning activity and the individual pupil, in France it is applied to teaching activity and the system itself rather than indirectly through pupil assessment. If the idea of a national norm is alien to anglo-saxon countries, its existence precludes the need for overt or formal accountability in the more romano-gallic, centralised tradition of countries such as France where it is the 'manièrè' and the 'matière' of teaching that is the principal unit of professional accountability, not the general outcomes of the school.
Within this general norm, there are several different systems of control however. On the one hand there is control within the administrative system including activities such as research. Control here is ensured in France by the structure of the Ministry itself whose power is such that any questioning of its activities, even at parliamentary level, is inconceivable in a way it is not in England.\textsuperscript{112} It is important to recognise, however, that the lack of any explicit accountability procedures is largely due to the pervasive ideology which underpins the system rather than any structural feature. "Somehow or other, the education system has convinced the public and parents that they have not got a right to claim accountability from the system".\textsuperscript{113} Indeed French educators would find considerable difficulty in identifying to whom they should give an account in a system preoccupied with ante-hoc control. The tradition of centralisation operates directly against even the formulation of this kind of grass-roots or administrative pressure. Indeed the idea of there not being even a minimal central control of curriculum and administration was almost universally inconceivable among those consulted in the French education system.

The other, related source of control is that of the teachers themselves. If they are more nominally than truly constrained by the ostensibly powerful inspection system on which depends their promotion (recognised by most inspectors), their practice is influenced by a common educational background, standardised teacher training and, frequently, shared social origins in the 'reactionary petite bourgeoisie".\textsuperscript{114} More important though is the power of the pervasive ideology which prevents most teachers even conceiving of themselves as anything but professional interpreters - pedagogic translators of common, central objectives.

Here, once again, is revealed the paradox of French educational provision and practice and of its associated accountability procedures.
A firm belief (not unaccompanied by frequent irritation with the inevitable 'red tape') in the necessity and the reality of centralisation to provide for pupils' geographical mobility, equality of provision everywhere and protection from local pressure disguises "a reality of idiosyncrasy as divergent as any in England".\textsuperscript{115}

This paradox is growing increasingly acute as the ideology of 'la démocratisation' means teachers with no preparation for the new demands being made on them such as mixed-ability teaching, or vocational training, find themselves increasingly torn between their theoretical belief in egalitarianism, and the practical problems it brings in the classroom. "There is a gap between the political ideology of teachers and the constraints of the teaching situation which is huge in France since they are, in a sense, contradictory".\textsuperscript{116} This contradiction is further exacerbated for teachers by a conflict of loyalties between that as civil servants, held to the state, that held by many to a political party, and that to the pupils themselves. This last, however, is probably the least significant, given the fact that "la situation française est toujours caractérisée par une très forte idéalisation de débats entre les associations"\textsuperscript{117} which situates controversies primarily at the level of educational structure and provision with issues to do with pupils scarcely figuring.

The contradictions of the teaching situation at the present time are indeed legion and centre particularly around issues of control and accountability. On the one hand teachers cling to the traditional protection of their direct relationship with the central or regional and essentially, impersonal, authority of the bureaucracy, against what they currently perceive to be the growing power of the headteacher (traditionally minimal) and parents. The demise of almost all external assessment (a traditional protection for teachers) in favour of
'orientation' by teachers makes this vulnerability particularly acute at the present time. If, on the other hand, teachers want to be free from the irritations of bureaucracy and to be free to respond pedagogically to the varying needs of particular groups of pupils, they do not want the responsibility for curricular decisions, nor do they want to lose that considerable freedom which was traditionally a feature of centralised control. This is a particularly interesting paradox, since it is normally assumed in England that freedom and centralisation are opposites whereas in both theory and practice, many French teachers see them as complementary. Centralisation provides a support structure and a protection which, given the impossibility of close day to day supervision, leaves the individual teacher free from the sort of manifold public and professional pressures a teacher in a decentralised system is subject to. But if French teachers are currently confused about what they want, their role crisis is being further exacerbated by a significant decline in status, a worsening of conditions of service for many, large-scale financial cuts and a significant change in the traditional commitment of many parents and pupils to the value of education. Thus teachers do not typically test the limits of their freedom since they have been 'caged' (Giddens, 1971) for so long. The objective situation of participants and the subjective situation they perceive and act upon are often very different. This chapter is written in the light of this dual perspective seeking to identify some of the 'micropolitical' gaps (Hoyle, 1982) between theory and practice as they relate to the traditional and continuing idiosyncrasies of French provision for the control and organisation of the education system and thus to the overall subject of this thesis.
Inspection

The inherent contradictions as well as the contemporary pressures on the structure and process of French education have not passed by one of the major instruments of system control - the Inspectorate. From the earliest, post Napoleonic days of state educational provision, the 'Inspecteurs Généraux' have played the principal role in the central determination and local implementation of the curriculum. Later their limited numbers were supplemented by the addition of Inspecteurs Departementaux (IDEN) first instituted in 1835 and mainly responsible for primary education. The role of the inspector reflects once again the consistent paradox of French educational organisation. Teachers resent and fear them and yet accept and welcome their authority as subject experts and as protection against the power of the chef d'Établissement. They are alternately 'inspecteur-flic' and 'inspecteur protecteur'. Their formal bureaucratic inspection role is directed towards individual teachers and not, as in England, towards the school as a whole. Thus, inspection of individual teachers militates against the development or 'animation' role with which inspectors are increasingly being charged.

"The concept of 'animation' is seen by many teachers as incompatible with the annual mark and the continuation of the traditional pattern of hierarchical relationships. After 1968 teacher attitudes seem to have swung towards a desire for a change in the nature of the relationships within the system while the Ministry was largely concerned with more effective management than that offered by the annual visit." 119

At all events, the result is a particularly acute dilemma for the IDEN whose local role means they are more explicitly caught between central bureaucracy and classroom reality. For teachers, the inspector may be the only contact with the educational hierarchy and hence, the principal
focus for professional accountability. But whilst understanding and responding to diverse local problems and frustrations, the IDEN must also be the arm of central authority. One effect of the present legitimation crisis in central authority is increasing pressure on the autonomy of local inspectors which has the effect of making their job even more difficult.

"If this degree of freedom, this margin of autonomy is being eroded by pressures from the top, it is being eroded also by the effect of certain irresponsible actions at grass-roots level which, as we know, are not anticipated by SNI. In the advanced guard, accessible to everyone, in contact with real, and concrete problems, the IDEN is vulnerable. It is only too easy to threaten him, to hide things from him or to expose him to public view. In caricaturing him, it is possible to make the IDEN a symbol of all the authoritarianisms, the mouth-piece of all the frustrations and in so doing, one creates, if one is not careful, what one is claiming to fight... we refuse to become simply the agents of authority, since that would be to refuse, more or less, 'animation'."

Or, in the words of a regional inspector in Calvados, the inspector is increasingly "a prisoner of administrative regulations and of the manifold activities of a corporate management structure".

Thus for the IDEN too, like for the teachers themselves, the responsibility to implement ministerial policy whilst responding to the specific demands of local circumstances produces a contradiction between relative administrative freedom and considerable ideological constraints. In practice the objectives are fixed but the methods are relatively free. Unlike the English situation where the authority of the Inspector has been largely personal, in France it is typically bureaucratic, resting particularly on the role inspectors traditionally have played in teachers' promotion. In practice the inspectors themselves are the first to recognise that this power is now severely limited. There is the practical problem of getting round a huge number of schools. Many teachers have not been inspected for ten years and most not for three or more. Inspectors must, unlike formerly, forewarn the teacher so that "we know
their habits and when they come we arrange things in order to please them" (college teacher, Calvados). Even with the lowest 'note' a teacher will still progress up the salary scale - albeit at a slower pace, and once on the top, is in an unassailable position. Very few inspectors now wish to cause the nervous breakdowns which sometimes still result from the knowledge of an impending visit, the style is 'taper à un côté du clou', to persuade and inspire. It is this very emphasis on 'animation' which is one of the strongest indications that there is considerable scope for individual teacher choice as far as pedagogy at least is concerned. Not only do teachers have a wide choice of textbooks, many of them have never seen the official curricular programmes which were, until recently, only supplied to inspectors.

Problems of Process-based Accountability

The contemporary inadequacy of inspection to fulfil its traditional role of system control is one factor in the particularly acute nature of the contemporary French educational crisis, which is more or less directly due to the various contradictions inherent in central control. Although France is not alone in facing the educational problems caused by economic recession, falling rolls and public disillusionment, its curricular and organisational traditions have tended to inhibit attempts to make the system more responsive to changing national and individual needs and demands for more democratic control. Teacher training, for example, which traditionally has been crucial in making a reality of centralisation, through subjecting teachers to a common 'formation' experience, far from preparing teachers to adapt to change, continues as one of the principal sources of stasis and homogeneity in French classroom practice. As one Inspecteur put it: "the system is involved with the reproduction of
educational models which the present people in authority learned when they were kids". This is one of the principal themes of Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1976) analysis of educational reproduction.

Teachers' reluctance or inability to change is further reinforced by public opinion and by the fact that the central administration, since it is expected to provide statutory, rather than simply 'exhortatory' guidance, as in, for example, England, and for the political reasons already discussed, can only depart marginally from the prevailing, tradition-based consensus. For similar reasons, this tendency is reinforced by the habit of text book editors to 'play safe' and to be out of touch with reality (librarian, collège). Such freedom that exists with regard to text books is further limited by the time lag in putting them into use. This is a significant point for it is arguable that it is the out of date nature of syllabuses and texts, rather than centralised prescription per se, that produces the visible strains in French education, given the widespread support for centralisation among teachers on traditional, professional or egalitarian grounds.

Despite the Ministry's efforts since the Haby reform of 1976 to make education more concerned with the development of the 'whole' person, they seem unable to relinquish the traditional academic requirements. Haby's booklet published in 1977 stating what the 'average' French school leaver should be able to do is an odd mixture of practical skills and competence together with knowledge of Voltaire and Racine.

There is undoubtedly an element of truth in one teacher's remark that the Ministry is itself unwilling to consider fundamental change since "more than a token gesture of modernity and enlightenment would be an admittal of faults in the existing system" (lycée proviseur, Calvados).

Clearly then, centralism remains directly and indirectly a barrier to change. Directly in the lumbering inefficiency of a huge bureaucracy
which cannot adequately provide the training and resources necessary to implement policy changes at the level of classroom practice. Indirectly in the attitudes it encourages in which defensiveness, passivity and traditionalism predominate over initiative and self-reliance. The foregoing analysis has suggested that recent, essentially half-hearted attempts on the part of government to replace this extreme centralism with a system better geared to respond to the very significant changes currently taking place in the demands being made on the education system, have so far had little real impact. Not only have they made little progress in relieving the tensions in the education system, they have at times 'fallen between two stools', arousing the hostility rather than the enthusiasm of the lower levels of the bureaucracy. The alternating and confused rhetoric of decentralisation is a manifestation of the power struggles inherent in such a reform and a general lack of clarity of purpose. The contradictions inherent in the notion of increased regional or local autonomy are well expressed by Wright (1980), who suggests regionalism is seen as a means

"of both strengthening and weakening the unity of the nation; of regenerating the State and rejuvenating the province, of improving the global performance of the French economy and of ironing-out disparities between the provinces; of increasing public participation and improving administrative efficiency. In short it is seen as an expression of democratic pluralism, as a technocratic need and as the search for national identity" (p. 50).

At the heart of the problem in France is the reality that whereas from the time of Napoleon until recently a centralised system was able to provide the legitimating ideology of national efficiency, professionalism and democratic equality, the maintenance of these ideologies now requires practices which are divergent. The desire of central government to be able to direct educational activity towards more vocational and
industrially oriented goals conflicts with the teaching profession's unpreparedness to respond to such new demands and, partly in consequence, their demoralisation and recourse to more traditional educational activities and the protection of their centrally-based professional status. At the same time, society as a whole has become increasingly sophisticated and politically aware and is no longer willing to tolerate the autocracy of either government or the teaching profession in deciding the nature or quality of its educational provision.

Democratisation: The Pressure for 'Moral' Accountability

Thus alongside the issues of decentralisation and deconcentration of formal authority is another form of pressure for the devolution of a measure of educational control which may be loosely subsumed within the term 'democratisation'. This pressure reflects on the one hand, a sense of frustration and powerlessness among parents in particular and, on the other, a desire on the part of both educational personnel and many pressure groups for a radical restructuring of educational provision to make it more 'democratic' in availability and content.

The pressure for more lay participation is associated with the more general climate of decentralisation since formerly state schools could not readily have responded to parents' wishes even if they had wished to - having little autonomy of their own (Bligh, 1982). In a highly centralised state, local issues and local politics have tended to be insignificant, their place being taken by national-level organisations and pressure groups. The "lure of power made possible by a centralised system" (Corbett, 1979) has produced for example four national federations of parents' associations, plus several for private schools with nearly two million members representing 25% of parents overall and covering the whole of the political spectrum.\(^{125}\)
At this level parents have frequently been a significant force as in, for example, the recent protests over class closures and the loss of many primary and auxiliary jobs because of a drop of 70,000 children in 1980-81 from the 1979-80 level, despite an increase in nursery school provision (Jessel, 1980a,b,c).

By contrast, parents can make little impression at the local level. Despite their formal role in the 'Conseil d'Établissement', given the control of teachers over pedagogy and the administration over finance, there is little real role for parents to play. Their part in the 'Conseil de Classe' also, which discusses the careers of individual pupils, may be overruled by the decisions of the 'Conseil des Professeurs' (Corbett, 1979). Only occasionally do parents make a notable impact at this level as in the recent two year suspension of a Parisian teacher for giving a class on sex education and at l'Étot primary school in Bayeux, the kidnapping of the headteacher to force the authorities to provide an extra teacher.

Parents' traditional lack of interest in educational issues may be the result in part at least of their almost total powerlessness to influence teachers. Although parents are legally responsible for their children's behaviour at school, teachers complain of the apathy of parents and their lack of respect. In general, only about 40% of parents ever consult teachers and the figure is only just half that in more specialist schools such as the lycées d'enseignement professionnels. Such involvement as there has been has normally been about questions of pupil progress rather than pedagogy - the jealously guarded professional preserve of teachers.

One manifestation of the pressure for democratisation in recent years, however, has been the beginnings of what could be a fundamental change in this traditional relationship. At the local level, parents are now
formally involved in the Conseil d'Administration, and in the Comité des Parents as well as the Conseil d'École (primary) and the Conseil d'Établissement (secondary). 129

"One [of the consequences] has been to make parents aware that they have a right to speak, to information, and even a right to oversee what is done at the school. From now on it will be more and more impossible to say to parents, 'That is not your business'." 130

Parents' commitment to these new procedures is reflected in the attendance rate of just over a third of the elected parents at an average of 40% of the meetings. Their significance is likely to be as much negative as positive, institutionalising and formalising dialogue and making increasingly explicit the demarcation between lay and professional interests. Ironically, as teachers feel this increasing pressure, they are pushing for the traditional protection of increased centralisation and professionalism so that in a real sense teachers' autonomy is likely to be curtailed, not increased, and constructive contact between teachers and parents lessened.

The recent yielding of a measure of 'souplesse' to teachers in response to their demands to be allowed to reflect local needs in their teaching is now associated with the idea that if teachers are to have more flexibility, parents must have more choice too. Nothing could be more alien to the cherished ideal of national equality of provision in France. There is a growing tendency, particularly in urban areas, for parents and teachers even to unite against the administration. Although these instances are still relatively rare, and depend on particular local circumstances and personalities they illustrate the necessarily dynamic nature of educational control which forces rival interests to group and re-group as central government loosens and tightens the reins of control in response to its own political situation and its need to legitimate and implement particular policies at any one time. As
Brickman (1979) suggests,

"decentralisation rarely proceeded from a state of complete central authority to one of unconditional local autonomy; where local institutions gained access to new areas of decision-making competence their margin of manoeuvre was restricted by indirect central controls" (p. 289).

The same could of course be said for England (Kogan, 1980).

The pressure for greater democracy in the organisation and content of the system has been related to the yielding of a greater say in the education system to parents but goes far beyond this. The dominant political rhetoric of the last two decades, even under the right wing, laissez-faire government of Giscard d'Estaing, has been 'democratisation'. This has meant on the one hand, attempts to set up a more democratic policy-making machinery and, on the other, a commitment to more equal and relevant educational provision in which traditional forms of selection and apparent elitism are replaced by equal, if different, provision for all. Under this latter heading come the 'comprehensive' reforms of first the streamed common lower secondary 'collège', later to be completely unstreamed - at least in theory - and shortly to be followed by the 'comprehensive' i.e. non-selective lycée. Fraser (1967) identifies the two stages of this process as first the removal of barriers for the bright - the institution of a meritocracy - and second, systemic change to provide for a mass improvement of standards.

But the proportion of working class children who reach university has not increased. Nor has the proportion of working class children who are two years behind in the second year of collège (Dundas-Grant, 1982). Some teachers argue that the reforms to date such as the provision of 'classes préparatoires de niveau' for the lowest achievers who can then tacitly leave school at 14 or the 'orientation' procedure which gives a spurious legitimation to failure, have increased the degree of inequality
in the system when they were ostensibly designed to reduce it. Schools
still vary according to the covert selection of their catchment area.
Many teachers are cynical: "to put them all in the same class and call
it 'democratisation' is merely using the word, because there they all
are in the class with their differences" (directrice de collège, Calvados).
Many teachers feel the real purpose, as with many other 'reformettes',
was to make education cost less. In the words of one pundit "the French
are expert at wrapping up convenient and often efficient policies under
labels of 'democratisation'". 132

The idea of the common school is however long-standing. As in
other European countries it first emerged after the First World War when
egalitarian teachers who had been in the army emerged to form 'les
Compagnons de l'Université Nouvelle'. In France, as elsewhere,
experience has now shown this long-standing commitment to equality of
opportunity to be ill-founded. Simply putting all children in the same
education setting cannot overcome the disadvantages of home background.
This is particularly so in France where the combined strength of
centralisation and tradition militates against either adequate preparation
for mixed ability or vocationally-oriented teaching or sufficient
flexibility for that relatively small proportion of teachers willing to
change their approach to develop suitable courses. Teachers appear to
be conscious of a widening gulf between home and school, particularly
with regard to working class families in which the reality of a school
system designed for those inhabiting a very different social world can
no longer be concealed beneath a traditional respect for learning and
belief in equality. They argue that the reality of unemployment for
many young school leavers has only served to exacerbate an existing
decline in family life and a rise in consumerism. This perspective,
frequently voiced by teachers, is also expressed by a leading French
educationist Louis Le Grand, now a government advisor on education, in his book, 'Pour une politique démocratique de l'éducation' subtitled 'quinze ans d'innovations pédagogiques' or 'le compte des illusions perdues'. As demographic, social and economic developments lead to new pupil problems, teacher morale declines: "the authorities try to face up to these transformations in the infrastructure by innovations which are immediately eroded and marginalised owing to the lack of a real stocktaking of their aims and their resources".  

This malaise is similarly expressed in the more graphic words of one teacher union official -

"It's as if this huge school's been built to accumulate and enclose children, just as the district of Authie has been built to accumulate and enclose working people and then the likelihood is that they'll be accumulated in some factory or commercial enterprise - one almost has the impression that in a suburb like this there exists no other horizon than to end up gathered in a factory or the like."  

As Le Grand suggests, the desire for reform on the part of central government seems to be a genuine attempt to respond to the growing crisis in French education. The themes of the reform are a mixture of 'new industrialist', 'old humanist' and 'public educator' values albeit difficult to disentangle from the activities of conflicting pressure groups and political interests. The principal problem is to develop a curriculum more in step with industrial needs which will at the same time be publicly legitimated both by its perceived relevance and opportunities and by the greater measure of democratic decision making within it. These issues are essentially similar to those that came to a head for higher education in 1968. Although less dramatic than the process of far-reaching reform and rapid return to tradition which followed those events, the major organisational reforms of schooling have arguably had as little impact. Le Grand suggests that this is due
to the inability of policy makers and practitioners alike to engage in
a radical critique of existing institutions and attitudes. Thus, for
example, although 'redoublement' is now no longer a formal policy, it
is still practised.

The perpetuation of a system in which many continue to be doomed
to endless repetition of an irrelevant curriculum (Dundas-Grant, 1975)
is reflected in, among other things, the level of petty crime and drug
taking. A recent survey of 47 collèges and lycées in Paris and its
suburbs revealed that pilfering was universal, vandalism was found in
four fifths of the schools, half had extortion rackets and a third serious
fights (Jessel, 1981). Corbett (1980) attributes a good deal of this
problem to the inability or unwillingness of teachers to abandon their
traditional and coercive approach, thus emasculating the structural and
curriculum reforms of the previous decade. It may be that ultimately
the government's dilemma will be solved by the pupils themselves in their
opting for different, more vocationally-oriented and technical courses.
This would go some way to meeting the 'new industrialists' needs for new
skills and at the same time help to dispel the disaffection and resentment
which is the concern of the 'public educator' lobby. Thirdly it would
help to force the hand of government in recognising the impossibility
of "leaving alone a secondary school system which has become archaically
academic and of backing off every time proposals for change run into
criticism with the self-appointed custodians of academic standards"
(Stevens, 1980).

As this quotation implies, faced with the reality of continuing
selection despite the persistent democratic rhetoric and a massive unease
about how to cope with these far-reaching organisational changes, teachers'
unions have largely been hostile to recent democratic reforms. As
increasing demands are being made on teachers at all levels with no real
decrease in the frustrations emanating from bureaucratic control, teachers are facing an increasingly profound ideological crisis between 'une thèse élitiste et une thèse démocratique' - a theoretical belief in egalitarianism and the practical problems it brings in the classroom. "There is a gap between the political ideology of teachers and the constraints of the teaching situation which is huge in France, and they are, in a sense, contradictory". 136

Although part of this difficulty is attributable to teachers' own conservatism a great deal is due to the impossibility of putting the reforms into practice without on the one hand, a degree of syllabus flexibility to allow for 'qualitative democratisation' and mixed ability teaching and, on the other, adequate teacher training. Given that until very recently, the government appeared to be taking no steps to build a framework for innovation, teachers are cynical about the genuineness of its intentions. Only recently have there begun to be experiments with 'groupes de niveaux' (setting) and a major commitment to in-service training although the proposed £156 million, five year programme is restricted so far to 'second degree' (lycée) teachers.

There is however a more fundamental division between teachers and their political and administrative masters. What at first sight appears to be conservatism is, in the view of many teachers, their opposition to 'new industrialist' utilitarianism and their championship of traditional 'old humanist' values. The words of one teacher are representative of this view. "For the last 22 years we've had a very conservative government which is not very interested in changing things and young people are prepared according to the way the state construes this situation. But we teachers are trying to form individuals, not technicians responding to the need to manufacture more cars, guns or whatever" (Directeur de collège, Calvados). Thus teachers' traditional practice is being
attacked from all sides from the Ministry who want innovation, the parents who want participation and the pupils who want relevance.

**Freedom versus Responsibility: Teachers' Professional Accountability**

A further related source of declining morale is teachers' loss of status. This is being experienced by instituteurs in particular. Instituteurs no longer enjoy the pre-eminent position in the community founded on their esoteric knowledge they once did. 75% are now women with poor career prospects. In the profession overall, an increasing number of teachers want to leave because of the often poor working conditions, lack of room for initiative and the isolation from professional contact which is an inevitable consequence of there frequently being no staffroom in a school and teachers being allowed home when they have done their set number of hours work. Innovations such as the 'équipe educative' which might have helped to overcome some of these problems of morale are typically doomed by the lack of any kind of tradition of collegial or school loyalty or ethos where employment has always been beyond the jurisdiction of an individual school.

This central control of employment is yet another source of dissatisfaction for many teachers since they cannot choose where they will work. The degree of dissatisfaction may be gauged by the fact that in 1979 only 39% of those agréés and certifiés (CAPES) who applied for a change of post were successful - the decision depending on an elaborate points system in which qualifications, inspectorial assessment, length of service and family circumstances are the chief determinants. There have been a number of teachers' strikes in recent years over the increasing difficulty of gaining those qualifications - Agrégation or CAPES - which are the basis of a permanent, as opposed to a temporary
auxiliary post in collège or lycée. The number of such posts has dropped by more than fifty per cent in many subjects in recent years. Teachers' strikes are relatively common in France - a phenomenon which is indirectly yet another effect of central control. Whereas in a decentralised country such as England, teachers battles have been predominantly over pay and conditions of service, the centralised organisation of the French system has led to an equally centralised opposition on the part of teachers in which educational issues are inextricably tied up with political struggle.

King (1981) suggests that in most societies teachers have well merited the title 'your obedient servant' whether to state, church, community or parents but nowhere have teachers held a more anomalous position than in France at once part of the growing of the state and, at the same time, an increasingly self-conscious profession often implacably opposed to government policy on principle and regardless of its direction. To understand the development of this hostility and its implications for contemporary practice, it is necessary to look back once again to the nineteenth century and the marginal social status which characterised teaching, particularly in the elementary school. Impoverished, but aspiring and articulate, teachers tended to support those very conservative values which helped to keep them subjugated - "The state did not know how to handle them. It allowed this idealism, which reflected a sense of unease and isolation in the world, to develop into political opposition" (Zeldin, vol. 1, p. 481).

"In effect, they became a caste, administering themselves and controlling promotions through their powerful unions with which no Minister chose to tangle" (Moody, 1978)

After the initial, bitter struggle for teachers as civil servants, to be allowed to join trade unions was won in 1925, the divergence in
the interests of the different sectors of the profession began to be apparent. The elite of the profession - the lycée teachers - were predominantly conservative, middle class and republicans. They formed the 'Syndicat National des Professeurs de Lycée' which refused to join the left wing Confédération Générale de Travailleurs which had the allegiance of the elementary school Instituteurs.

The two most powerful unions today, SNI (Syndicat National des Instituteurs) and SNES (Syndicat National des Enseignants Secondaires) (Duclaud-Williams, 1980) continue to be deeply divided, a fact which reflects the very different status, pay and conditions of the two levels. Over the past ten years the government has apparently been seeking to redress this inequality by raising the qualifications and hence, status and credibility of instituteurs. The first stage in this process was to require the Baccalauréat, then later, extending teacher-training from two to three years and finally involving the universities in the requirements that all teachers have both the Certificat d'Aptitude Pédagogique and the Diplôme d'Études Universitaires Générales. 138

Although they have been loosely grouped together within the Fédération d'Enseignement National since 1928 (Clark, 1967), the internal divisions of the teaching force have remained explicit. It is these divisions which have been the major cause of the relative failure of the teacher unions to make any impact on the structures within which they work, despite a generally militant orientation. 139 This militancy has among other things led to their inclusion at least nominally in the process of policy making through, for example, their monthly meeting with ministry representatives in the Conseil de l'Enseignement Générale et Technique. But it has also lost them the goodwill of parents and the public at large. 140

Many ordinary classroom teachers too complain that their unions
are too political and idealistic – particularly in the case of the far left and communist party-dominated SNI – the primary teachers' union. By contrast, Syndicat interest in pedagogical issues is relatively insignificant.¹⁴¹

In some ways, the thrall in which teachers unions hold educational policy-making coupled with their deep internal divisions have served the profession badly. Even those ministers like Haby, who are brave enough to risk innovation can be sure that they will be most unlikely to take with them all branches of the profession. This has a dual effect of, on the one hand, inhibiting reform at policy level and, on the other, of making central government wary of ceding any more formal power to the teachers. Paradoxically at the national level where teachers seem most powerful, they are most ineffective. At classroom level, where they seem most controlled, they are most free. This paradox is not at all obvious since the tradition of central control remains strong and indeed is embraced with enthusiasm by many teachers.

Napoleon's policy of relying first and foremost on normative control, particularly loyalty, rather than the coercive control of inspection and sanctions is thus still an effective basis of control despite the activities of the 'enfant terrible' which is the French teaching profession. The disadvantage of this policy is that at times when there is strong pressure for formal decentralisation of control – such as in 1968 or since the advent of the socialist government in 1981 – teachers to tend to want freedom without being prepared to shoulder the responsibility which must go with it.¹⁴² That teachers should strive after increased formal autonomy despite their traditional and not inconsiderable support for centralisation is yet another contradiction in the provision of French education. Given the delay, the inflexibility in response to local needs and the sense of powerlessness which tend to
go with central control, it is not surprising that teachers wish to get rid of some of the real consequences of centralisation whilst maintaining the benefits of it as an ideology.

New Management Strategies

It is clear that at the present time there is something of a crisis in French education. At the root of the problem is the inadequacy of the traditional basis for system control - central prescription and monitoring - to provide for a sufficient degree of flexibility and public acceptability in the rapidly changing social context in which it now operates. The knowledge explosion, the upsurge in democratic attitudes, employment protection and the power of the teacher unions, the sheer size of the operation have all in their own way helped to bring about this situation, and the need for normative rather than coercive control. Thus the place of overt control is increasingly being taken by a procedure more in keeping with the spirit of the age, namely corporate management, where this is taken to mean a technocratic, rational, problem-solving approach to planning and administration which effectively excludes explicit discussion of different policy options in terms of competing values.

Robin (1980) suggests that educational provision has been through four stages since the time of Jules Ferry in the mid 19th century. Up to the end of the First World War, philosophical questions were dominant; secondly, between the wars, came psychotechnical questions concerned with individual learning problems. This was replaced during the 1950s by didactical questions about how to teach and curriculum development. Finally, during the 1970s, has come the predominance of administrative questions about how to understand and control the increasingly diversified educational system on a scientific basis (les scientifiques).:
"In the future the increasingly important needs at the level of system control are without doubt going to make scientists play a mediating role between the pedagogues and the educational authorities" (Robin, 1980).143

The current popularity of 'administration and management' courses in many countries including Britain suggests that the reasons which underlie this development are not concerned solely with the idiosyncratic anachronisms of French educational administration however, but reflect the common and more fundamental social changes currently affecting education. The growing scale of state activity together with the availability of computer-based administrative systems are not in themselves adequate explanations for this development. More fundamental is the change in attitude it reflects in which policy-issues which are in essence political are re-defined as managerial, or technical problems to which the answer is simply a question of logical, scientific enquiry or analysis. Given the deep crises of educational objectives which has been one of the main themes of this chapter, and the breakdown of traditional areas of consensus, a 'managerial' approach can help to disguise the strains caused by the different ideologies of the 'old humanists', the 'new industrialists' and the 'public educators', especially since the relationship between these different priorities and different kinds of educational practice is itself no longer clear.

The ramifications of this tendency extend into every aspect of the educational system in that individual or group interests find it increasingly difficult to make themselves heard against the apparently impartial judgements of science. Teachers' explicitly normative stance can more easily be dismissed as sectarian so that many professional issues can be taken out of such debate and re-defined simply as technical questions.144 Pupils find it hard to find grounds for contradicting the apparently rational 'orientation' that their superiors have agreed to be
in their best interests. Roles are increasingly depersonalised with a corresponding increase in the formal (i.e. rational) allocation of responsibilities. In one lycée of 1,800 pupils, for example, there might be a head, a deputy head, four educational advisers to organise pastoral and social activities, a school manager and his five or six staff.

At local and national administrative levels, the ascendancy of a managerial approach is resulting in an increasing emphasis on cost-accounting, information science and administrative paperwork. One Inspecteur d'Académie suggested he was now "a prisoner of administrative regulations" and instead of spending three quarters of his time on pedagogical matters and one quarter on administration - as hitherto - the proportions are now reversed. Apart from its practical utility, the growth of corporate management has been hastened by those more general strains affecting education already discussed. Paradoxically once again, as the upsurge in democratic consciousness means education is increasingly being defined as a political issue, the Ministry defence is to re-define issues in terms of a managerial emphasis on 'technical' problems.

Kidd provides a good illustration of this pressure in his discussion of the rénovation pédagogique in 1970 in which he suggests that the ideological differences between traditionalists, progressives and technocrats limited the scale of the proposed reforms such as 'modern maths' to a stable, carefully controlled pace. In the event,

"it fell to an agency, unrelated except possibly dialectically to the original springs of the rénovation pédagogique, to implement the reform ... The rénovation pédagogique, largely a product of the utopian tendency (the 1968 rénovation commission in fact quoted directly from Langevin-Wallon) depended for its implementation on the representative of the technocratic model, which thus turned apparently common educational measures to radically different ends." 145
It may be argued, then, that the effect of the deep ideological divisions between traditional and progressive elements within the education system is often, ironically enough, the provision of a major source of support for the technocrats. This is basically the problem of finding a sufficient degree of consensus over the criteria of professional accountability. As Neave suggests, the problem of accountability is at root a question of the legitimacy of the state and is thus subject to variation as the role of the state is "defined, confined and redefined - usually at times of conflict and legitimation ..". In place of the egalitarian, centralist ideology that has until recently provided the legitimation for both professional accountability and ministerial activity since the earliest days of the Université, have emerged the several different ideologies as separate entities - traditionalism and standards, democratisation, and administrative efficiency, which it once combined. As a result, policy-making and implementation become increasingly difficult and the technocratic basis for legitimation which takes issues out of the realm of values into that of mere pragmatism, correspondingly appealing. 146

It would be wrong, however, not to look for the roots of this movement in a much older tradition in French education. Ever since the 'Grandes Écoles' were introduced during the Revolution while the universities were closed, with the idea of providing for high level, applied training for a specific number of specialist posts, this technocratic tradition has been identifiable. In recent decades, government services have been staffed by an élite corps of carefully selected professional administrators trained at the École Nationale d'Administration (ENA) which has also supplied many political and industrial leaders. Within the Ministry of Education, many of the senior officials are graduates of the École Normale Supérieure. Thus together these two
groups provide a level of specialist input which is in direct contrast to English styles of civil service and government which have been generally resistant to the idea of specialists in government. One result of the French approach is the creation of an 'old-boy network' of Grandes Écoles graduates that considerably facilitates policy-making - albeit informally. As specialists, it is the civil servants that provide the administrative stability and continuity in contrast to ministerial instability. From this 'culte d'administration'\textsuperscript{147} this 'cleracy',\textsuperscript{148} of administrators comes a typically French tendency to create administrative structures even where these no longer serve any definite purpose (Smith, 1980). But if "la planification et la centralisation sont des mambelles de l'éducation française... elles sont sèches" (Malan, 1974), for, as has been suggested, traditional modes of administration are now inadequate to cope with the size and value diversity of the educational enterprise. Thus one stimulus to the institution of a more corporate management style is the need for a new legitimating ideology which can both conceal this value diversity and justify a more mechanistic approach to administration. Part of this ascendancy of a managerial approach in the Ministry is "because education is only now becoming identified as a political phenomenon ... there is less pedagogical and more managerial emphasis in the Ministry ... its problems are becoming more technical".\textsuperscript{149}

Neave\textsuperscript{150} has suggested that it is significant that this more technocratic approach to educational management developed at precisely the time when education itself was becoming less of a concern of framework planning. The development of a new, technocratic style of administration geared to producing greater efficiency began to develop in the early seventies just at the time time education could no longer rely on either the political support or the resources and priority it
had enjoyed in the four year plans of the previous decade. In this respect, the growth of corporate management strategies in France shares many points in common with similar developments taking place in England at the same time, reflecting an increasing, if still covert, concern with tightening the lines of bureaucratic accountability. In other aspects of the increasing rationalisation of management such as successive reorganisation of the Ministry of Education along more specialist lines; the tendency to reduce the amount of teacher participation in advisory bodies and the increasing number of inter-ministerial decisions, the trend may be traced back through the whole history of the Fifth Republic.

The contemporary crisis in confidence in education, the value vacuum created by the demise of the liberal egalitarian consensus and the need for new modes of social control brought about by associated developments in the industrial and social order are themes which are common to both Chapters Five and Six. They are taken up explicitly, if more theoretically, in Chapter Seven.

Along with the ideological context for change however there has gone the associated development of administrative techniques which has made a more 'technicist' approach to management possible. In a paper which traces the developing role of government statistics as part of the growth of corporate management, Seibel (1980) suggests:

"If one compares the current characteristics of educational statistics to those which prevailed before 1930, the most striking aspect is the integration and centralisation of this function for all types of teaching". 151

Significant in this respect has been the setting up of the Département de Statistiques et de Sondages within the Ministry of Education and, since 1970, the splitting of 'Directions d'Objectifs par Grand Domaines' into 'la Direction de la Prévision' and 'Les
Directions Chargées des Moyens'. Thus under one director comes "the tasks of planning and formulating the political objectives of education while the responsibility for the management of the provision of information systems and innovation in methods of administration was given to a department whose technicist character thus found itself sharply defined" (Seibel, 1980). Malan (1974) reinforces this point:

"the institution in March 1970 of a structure called 'management by objectives' within the central administration, carried with it the idea that all the activities of state education must be considered as a system of activities which could be categorised hierarchically, against each other, in terms of the outcomes that could be achieved for a given cost".  

The activities of the Département de l'Organisation et de la Gestion Déconcentrée have meant that the limited amount of administrative, pedagogical and financial decentralisation which has been instituted in recent years has been more than compensated for by the increased efficiency of the local administration of the education service through the widespread use of centrally-provided computer packages which both collect detailed data on individual schools and help in the various administrative tasks of finance, staffing and school organisation. In addition, the availability of such detailed and standardised information on a local basis provides the central Ministry with a clearer picture than ever before of the education system in the country as a whole.

A significant part of this new picture is provided by 'Une Mission Nouvelle d'Évaluation des Résultats du Système Éducatif' whose task is similar to that traditionally performed subjectively by the Inspecteurs Généraux (IGEN). Arguably, the institution of this new 'mission' represents a very significant change from a qualitative to a quantitative emphasis in the evaluation of systemic performance and can be taken as a very clear illustration of the prevailing technical ideology. It may
well have profound implications for the way in which control of the operation of the education system is likely to develop in the near future.

Conclusion

Little has been said explicitly about assessment procedures in this second part of the chapter which has been concerned with identifying some of the defining characteristics of French educational provision and how these national traditions influence the translation of changing social imperatives into educational practice. The purpose of this analysis however has been quite specific namely to illuminate the part that evaluation procedures play in making the system as a whole responsive to the changing socio-economic context. It was argued in Chapter Four that such evaluation procedures may be conceptualised in terms of accountability (i.e. control) relations which in some countries emphasise the 'post-hoc' evaluation of educational products and in others, the 'ante-hoc' evaluation of educational processes. The foregoing analysis of the French situation provides a detailed substantiation of this argument, depicting as it does a country in which traditional modes of accountability emphasising control of the educational process have become steadily more ineffective in the face of the system's increasing size and a growing diversity of social values. In outlining some of the recent policy developments in French education, Chapter Five has attempted to show how such traditional modes of control are gradually being complemented by the institution of various product-based accountability procedures. Of particular significance in this respect has been the growing strength of a technicist orientation to educational provision which both makes possible and legitimates an increasingly quantitative and impersonal,
even mechanistic, approach to educational accountability.

Thus France has been moving towards the traditional English reliance on the collection and dissemination of information about educational processes and outcomes to provide the criteria for the powerful normative control inherent in self-imposed professional accountability. As will be argued in Chapter Six, whilst England is seeking to strengthen central control of the education system by the establishment - in a number of different ways - of central norms of performance, France is translating its long-standing tradition of the central prescription of curricular objectives into similar norms of performance in which various newly-instituted forms of evaluation and assessment provide for professional accountability. Whilst it is the central identification of norms which is uncharacteristic in England, it is the emphasis on evaluation rather than prescription as the basis for control which is novel in France.
Footnotes to Chapter Five

1. See, for example, the special issue of Comparative Education on this subject, Vol. 13, no. 2, 1977.

2. Copies of the draft final report on the project for SSRC were sent to all English and French interviewees for comment.

3. The parallel with the 1862 Revised Code in England is explicit here.

4. Although a national system of education that was both free and lay was not finally established until the Loi Ferry of 1881 and despite the impetus that the Loi Falloux of 1850 gave to the growth of church schools, the commitment to providing mass state education continued to gain strength in subsequent years.

5. 'Liberté' was originally conceived in the later half of the eighteenth century as freeing the labouring classes from the tyranny of the aristocracy. Thus historically, it was not in conflict with 'égalité' and 'fraternité' (V. Dundas-Grant).

6. Charles Fourier (1772-1837) was a major socialist reformer and one of the first pioneers of women's education.

7. This point is made by Archer (1980) who suggests that apparently major reforms, such as those attempted by Debre and Berthoin were essentially 'à la marge' since as Fouchet suggested French education was one of the biggest enterprises in the world and about as responsive to the expression of social interests and local demands as the Red Army!

8. Though it is now science as in for example the Bac 'C' (maths and physics) rather than arts, as in the Bac 'A' (lettres) which is the most prestigious, philosophy is still a compulsory subject in the final year of non-technical lycées.


10. French education statutes show this contradiction as clearly as the curriculum does. See for example, Education Act no. 75:620 (11/7/75).


13. "Mais comme la société, absorbée par le souci de sa croissance, se refuse à dire clairement sur quel système de valeurs doit réposer l'éducation, ce qui est un choix politique et philosophique, l'éducation elle-même devient impossible. Le drame est que ces systèmes qui tombent en ruine ne peuvent être remplacés par les conceptions trop pragmatiques et trop fonctionnelles que la société industrielle suggère à l'école : préparer les travailleurs, apprendre à apprendre, etc. La croissance économique et l'intégration sociale ne peuvent longtemps dissimuler ce qu'elles sont : des moyens, auxquels la société doit assigner leur fin; et elles ne peuvent
22. It is interesting to note the English parallel here that as White (1975) argues, was one of the main reasons for the Tory party measures to decentralise English education in the 1920s.

23. "Par l'instruction morale et religieuse, il pouvoit déjà à un autre ordre de besoins tout aussi réels que les autres, et que la Providence a mis dans le coeur du pauvre, comme dans celui des heureux de ce monde, pour la dignité de la vie humaine et la protection de l'ordre sociale" (Monteur Universel 3.1.1833).

24. Part of the source of the Catholic church's determination not to lose its traditional hold on the education system is that Rule 2 of Canon Law states that the church must have oversight of education (Neave, 1981, personal communication).

25. Napoleon 'Pensées Politiques et Sociales', p. 213

26. It is interesting to note once again the comparison here with England in the nearly simultaneous setting up of a national educational inspectorate (HMI) despite a very different administrative tradition. This is testimony to both the growing size of educational provision and an increasingly widespread belief in both countries that such provision should be a charge upon the state.

27. The Université was set up by Napoleon in 1808 as a national system of education. It embodied the two central principles of supreme central control and a state monopoly of instruction although non-elite, elementary education which had a very different purpose and was almost totally separate in its provision, was only tenuously included (see for example, Archer, 1979, pp. 201-3).

28. "Comme au moyen âge, toute la société se régalait sur la hierarchy féodale, on assimila au jeune chevalier tous ceux qui débutaient dans une carrière. On appela bachelier un moine qui n'était pas encore prêtre, un jeune homme non marié, un apprenti soumis aux gardes du métier, enfin un théologien et un étudiant qui avait obtenu le premier des grades universitaires. Le mot 'bachelier' ne se prend plus que dans cette acception" (Fremy and Fremy, 1978).

29. "Un acte passé par-devant notaire par lequel un apprenti et un maître s'engagent un reciprocement, l'apprenti à apprendre un act ou un métier, et le maître à lui montrer pendant un certain temps, moyennant des conditions déterminées." (Chervel, 1874, Dictionnaire Historique des Institutions moeurs et coutumes de la France, Librairie Hachette, Paris, p. 5).

30. Thus, for example, Bourdieu and Passeron found that working class students were the highest achievers in the Latin sub-group of the lycée because, they suggest, these students have had to exhibit exceptional qualities in order to be selected for and persist in a channel so unlikely for students of their background. Such students compare badly, however, against the most talented middle-class students who 'invest' their cultural capital in those high status subjects on which there is most return.

31. Creation of the 'Baccalauréat ès Sciences' was in 1852.
tenir lieu du système de valeurs et de normes que requiert toute éducation et philosophique 'sans lequel l'éducation elle-même devient impossible' (Prost). It is interesting to note that Prost has recently been charged with chairing a major review of the lycée stage of French education. The report published in November 1983 and entitled 'Les Lycées et Leur Éducation au seuil du XXIème Siècle' (Rapport au Directeur des lycées présenté par le Groupe de Travail National sur les Secons Cycles. Service d'information, Paris.), See also 'Declaration de Monsieur Alain Savary, Ministre de l'Education Nationale, sur les Lycées, Paris, 14/2/1984, in which he gives his reactions to the Prost report. Reaction in the press suggests that the report is fairly uncontentious and is unlikely to result in major changes—which is surprising in the light of the above quotation.

14. "Quand une société ne peut pas enseigner c'est que cette société ne peut pas s'enseigner; c'est qu'elle a honte, c'est qu'elle a peur d'enseigner elle-même; pour toute humanité, enseigner, au fond, c'est s'enseigner; une société qui n'enseigne pas est une société que ne s'aime pas; que ne s'estime pas et tel est précisément le cas de la société moderne".

15. See also Jean Zay 1936. After the Second World War the Langevin-Vallon Commission (1944-46) well expressed the new spirit of meritocracy which has been the dominant legitimating ideology within French education since that time.

16. Hayward (1974) suggests that Pompidou had more power than any head of state since Napoleon III, the fact that this was not immediately apparent being due to the strict political discipline of the Gaullists and the disarray of their opponents.

17. Parker (1984), personal communication. This point is well-evidenced by the recent experiences of the Mitterand Government.

18. At the time of writing M. Savary has instituted a major review of each stage of education—primary, collège, lycée and university and has grasped the nettle of attempting to reform private school legislation. The fact that little practical change has so far resulted from these reviews is a good example of the relative weakness of socialist governments, despite their popular mandate to introduce radical reform.

19. This legislation, designed to bring private and state systems closer together, provoked a number of massive (500,000+) demonstrations of parents during March 1984 on the theme of freedom in education and it seems likely that on this issue too, as on the controversial Le Grand proposals for collège reform, M. Savary will have to back down. See Follain, M. 'A thousand days of Mitterand rule', TES 16.3.1984, p. 18.

20. "De nos débats il est sortie surtout un procès—celui de l'administration" (Agblemagnon)

21. "Le problème de l'administration est peut-être d'avoir à gérer la contradiction, ou la logique de l'administration est exclusive de toute contradiction" (Ardoino).
32. See, for example, The Education Secretary's speech at the North of England conference, January 1984, Sheffield.

33. It is important to stress, however, that these are largely policy changes, the degree of real change in the ethos and institutional organisation of schooling varying from school to school, since the common school and the common course could not, of themselves, democratise a system in which none of the fundamental controls or ideology were changed (Broadfoot, 1980).

34. For a study of the way in which different establishments contribute to 'Bac' success, see Le Monde de l'Éducation no. 81, March 1982. Also, Le Monde de l'Éducation November 1983, 'Faut-il supprimer le bac' and February 1984, 'Rapport Prost, diagnostic nuancé'.


37. Instituteur, Calvados, France.

38. For a recent official discussion of this phenomenon, see 'Le Courrier de l'Éducation', no. 44.

39. "Ce qu'il faut éviter, avant tout c'est l'orientation par l'échec ... Il n'y a pas de métier qui correspond à un échec, mais il y a des métiers qui correspondent à des dispositions diverse ... l'orientation ne peut cependant être le fait de l'école seule. Elle doit être le résultat d'une collaboration entre les enfants - concernés au premier chef, les parents qui sont responsables d'eux, et l'école" (Christian Beullac interview in Le Monde de l'Éducation, March 1981).

40. Notably the 'Compagnons de la Nouvelle Université' (1917-1924).

41. See, for example, Le Courrier de l'Éducation no. 82, September 1979. Also, Le Monde de l'Éducation, March 1981.


44. This is very much the argument of Michel Foucault, discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, as set out in his 'Surveiller et Punir'. Paris, Gallimard. Also, I am drawing on an interview with M. Guy Berger, Département des Sciences de l'Éducation, Université De Paris-Vincennes.
45. See, for example, Bourdieu and Passeron's French data in this respect in 'Le Réproduction'. More generally, see Nash, R. (1976) 'Teacher Expectations and Pupil Learning' RKP, and Sharp, R. and Green, A. (1976) Education and Social Control, RKP. From his own research, Jim Kidd reports that the abolition of a formal 'entrée en sixième' assessment has provoked complaints that there is no guarantee of objectivity in the new procedures but rather, accumulating evidence that pupils' socio-economic background may influence teachers' assessments, especially as it is expressed in differential linguistic competence (personal communication, 1980).

46. See note 43.

47. A. Prost, 'Les lycées et leurs études au seuil du XXIème siècle', Rapport au Directeur des lycées présenté par le Groupe de Travail National sur les seconds cycles. Service d'information, Nov. 83. "En premier lieu, les critères retenus sont uniformes. L'orientation prend rarement en compte les centres d'intérêts des élèves et la diversité de leurs aptitudes. Les deux critères majeurs sont les résultats en mathématique et l'âge (nous avons eu déjà l'occasion de le signaler). En deuxième lieu, l'orientation se transforme fréquemment en une procédure d'affectation : les élèves doivent être répartis entre les sections qui existent, selon les capacités d'accueil des établissements. Cette procédure bureaucratique, jointe à la rigidité de la carte scolaire, engendre chez les familles un sentiment d'impuissance devant une technostructure aveugle. En troisième lieu, elle constitue une vaste distillation fractionnée, qui répartit les élèves entre des filières fortement cloisonnées et hierarchisées en fonction des modèles sociaux dominants : suprématie de la formation scientifique abstraite deconsidération pour les formation techniques et professionnelles."

48. This attitude is well paralleled in the more recent opposition by teachers to the Le Grand Report on collège reform. As a recent article in Le Monde expressed it, "It was crying 'No to the Le Grand Report or Reform the Collèges; Yes : on the backs of the teachers, no' that the participants afterwards demonstrated in Paris" (C'est en criant 'Non au rapport Le Grand ou Rénover les Collèges oui : sur le dos des Professeurs, non' que les participants ont en suite manifesté dans Paris). Le Monde, 25.1.83.

49. "Tout au long de sa scolarité il sera l'objet de la part de ses éducateurs d'une observation continue qui permettra de mieux adapter l'enseignement à ses besoins, l'aidera à se connaître et à bien préparer son orientation scolaire et professionnelle ultérieure" (ONISEP, 1979)


51. "L'orientation fonctionne ainsi en grand partie comme un mécanisme d'exclusions successives, au détriment des catégories sociales moins favorisées ... - on dit ce qu'on veut: ils disent si on peut .." Le Monde de l'Éducation, April 1980.

52. Fifteen per cent of pupils do not go to college at all according to Mme. B. Nonon of 'École et Famille'.

53. See, for example, Ministère de l'Éducation, Service des Études informatiques et statistiques : Département des techniques et études d'évaluation (1979), 'Observation psychopédagogique des élèves de cinquième'. This body has some elements in common with the English APU as an organ of central government concerned with the evaluation of standards, but differs in that it is principally concerned with cohort studies.

54. As Cicourel, A. and Kitsuse, J. (1968) suggest in 'The Social organisation of the High School and deviant adolescent careers' in Rubington, E. and Weinberg, M. (eds.), 'Deviance : the Interactionist Perspective', New York, Macmillan, the choice process in guidance and counselling of this type is not nearly as open and voluntarist as the rhetoric tends to suggest. See also Rosenbaum, J.E. (1976), 'Making Inequality, the Hidden Curriculum of High School Tracking', New York, Wiley.

55. See note 44.


57. Interview with Mme. T. Catz-Trevenin, Université de Paris-Vincennes, 1980.

58. See Le Monde de l'Éducation, no. 81, March 1982, and no. 92, March 1983.


61. Although "le nombre de sujets très brillants n'a pas augmenté". Fréméy and Fréméy (1978).

62. Between 1962 and 1966 Baccalauréat entries doubled and totalled 223,384 in 1967 (TES, 7.7.78). In 1967 59.8% of candidates were successful (Rothera, 1968). In 1979 65.8% of candidates passed the general Baccalauréat. In 1980 the figure was 66.1%. In 1979 58.6% passed the Baccalauréat de Technicien and 59.4% in 1980 (these figures break down into percentages of 72 Bac C, 67.9 Bac E, 64.5 Bac B, 65 Bac A and 63.4 Bac D.) Le Monde de l'Éducation, 1980.

63. Notably by means of the Propédictique exam held at the end of the first year of university.

64. Haby (1975), 'Pour la modernisation du système éducatif', Paris, La Documentation Française, Chapter 3.
65. After the Second World War there were several attempts to raise the number and status of technical qualifications - such as the Bac Technique in 1946, but these came to nothing with the continuing domination of the 'old humanist' influence of university professors (Archer, 1979).

66. Among school-leavers going on to higher education, 85.4% of Bac 'C' holders went on to long course higher education as against 54.3% of Bac 'E' holders. Service d'Études et d'Informations Statistiques (1978). Accession à l'Enseignement Supérieur des Bacheliers 1976 selon le Série du Baccalauréat. Paris, Ministère de l'Éducation.

67. Seven out of eight medical students are failed at this point (Pautler, 1981b).


69. Interview with M. G. Belbenoit, Inspecteur Générale.

70. "Quand, l'année suivante, ils sont publiés, tous les professeurs les traitent ou les font traiter par leurs élèves" (Le Courrier, no. 80, May 1979).

71. See the discussion by Louis Le Grand in Le Monde de l'Éducation, February 1981.

72. This is recognised even by the principal guardians of central control and academic standards, the Inspecteurs Généraux. See also the 1983 Prost Report and Le Monde de l'Éducation, March 1982, March 1983.

73. Le Courrier de l'Éducation, no. 80, May 1979 describes the operation for the Académie of Reims in which, for example, there are 205,000 question papers for the Bac de Technicien alone. In 1978 there were 336,991 candidates for the Bac, 63,000 for Agrégation and Capés (secondary teaching qualification), 560,000 for various brevets and certificates professionels (CAP, BEP, BP, BT, BTS) including, in 1976, prior to the Haby reforms, 550,000 candidates for the Brevet d'Études du Premier Cycle - a total of more than one million every year.

74. "Il est malheureusement à craindre que les différences observées entre examinateurs ne soient pas entièrement explicables par les caractères propres à la situation d'examen".

75. Criticism of examinations in this respect is long-standing. 'La docimologie' has been an active branch of scholarship since the 1930s. Interview with M. Lucien Geminard, Doyen de l'Inspection Générale de l'Education Nationale.

76. Interview with M. Grandbois, IGEN and M. Teynier, Directeur adjoint des lycées; also Mme. Feneuille, now Directeur du Centre International de Recherche Pédagogique et Sèvres.

78. Jessel, in an article entitled 'Strike threat recedes as new year gets under way' in TES 19.9.1980 describes how as teachers discovered the Haby reforms were not being implemented in practice, hostility declined. It is worth noting, however, that Duclau­d-Williams (1982) attributes teacher union hostility to the Haby reforms as an essentially political struggle in which the specifically educational issues are relatively unimportant.

79. Indeed so strong is the tradition that the measure of autonomy hard won as a result of the student riots of 1968 which were partly a response to the reactionary effects of tight national control was very short lived. The increased freedom nominally granted to universities under the 1968 Loi d'Orientation ceded a measure of budgetary and curriculum control, thus apparently responding to demands for increased participation and autonomy. In practice, while the national system of accreditation, selection procedures and teaching conditions remained unchanged, central control also remained substantially unchanged (Brickman, 1979; Premfors, 1979). Even this limited freedom was short lived however, since an amendment to the law in June 1971 extended the Ministry's power under article 20 with regard to 'habilitation' - the way in which local programmes of study are accredited for state qualifications. Henceforth the Ministry was to determine for each discipline and each category of establishment and student, the method of grading, a step which put the Ministry back into the business of "prescribing curriculum, examinations and methods of teaching for the entire university system" (Patterson, 1972). The power of national certificates to control curricula is also well illustrated by the experience of the substantial minority of private schools who, as an OECD report of 1970 pointed out, had to conform to national curricula because of the state monopoly of public examinations and certification.

80. t 10, instituteur, Calvados.

81. Quoted by Malan, 1974, p. 25.

82. See, for example, Le Courrier de l'Éducation, 11.4.77 and 25.4.77.

83. "L'application de règles identiques à des niveaux identiques (entre académies, départements, établissements) entretient l'illusion d'égalité de traitement alors que la très grande hétérogénéité soit des situations de départ, soit simplement de taille de chacune de ces unités demanderait des adaptations en fonction d'un examen approfondi de ces différences".

84. "Si l'immensité et l'inertie du système éducatif constituent un facteur de stabilité ... elles entraînent une lenteur considérable de diffusion de toute action rénovatrice malgré l'ampleur des moyens mis en œuvre ... il ne peut s'agir que d'une simple réduction des problèmes nationaux à l'échelle locale".

85. This analysis of practice is supported theoretically by Habermas (1976, p. 12) in his critique of systems theory in which he suggests that it is within the processes of interaction that participants find the meaning for events, call for legitimation of political actions and constitute their own ego and group identities in ways which motivate them to act within specific social situations.
86. Interview with lycée teacher, Calvados, France.


88. Interview with Mme. Feneuille, op. cit.

89. Interview with chef d'établissement, small primary school, Calvados.

90. Interview with M. D. Girard, IGEN. The only exception to this is the teachers 'note' in which two thirds of the mark is given by the inspector (representing the pedagogic hierarchy) and one third is given by the chef d'établissement in the name of the Recteur and the administrative hierarchy. This distinction was referred to by M. Daste, le Directeur Adjoint du Cabinet, Ministère de l'Education.


93. Interview with J. Dehaussy. Interview with Mme. Simone Dutoit, assistant to the Recteur d'Académie du Creteil.

94. Lycée Proviser, Calvados. Interesting, this view is partly echoed from the very different perspective of one of the leading Recteurs - Jacques Dehaussy of Creteil. See also Dehaussy, J. 'L'expérience du Pouvoir dans le Système Éducatif : le témoignage d'un recteur', Administration et Éducation 1980, no. 2, pp. 37-41.

95. 64% of a school's budget comes from central government, but schools are now free to spend this how they wish. Given the level of fixed costs and fixed staffing this concession is more apparent than real.


97. "Les situations varient beaucoup d'un collège à l'autre et ce qui vaut ici ne vaut pas nécessairement ailleurs". Le Courrier de l'Education, 16.10.78.

98. For example one major teacher union - SGEN - is in favour of decentralisation as the basis for democracy whereas another major union for secondary school teachers - the SNES - is against decentralisation in its championship of the traditional idea of equality. One of Haby's proposals was a greater measure of autonomy for the Directeur de l'École. Teachers were against this proposal, however, since they feared what would often in practice be the institution of yet another level of hierarchy (Kidd, 1979, personal communication).

99. By 1971 90% Catholic primary schools have the 'contrat simple', 94% Catholic secondary schools the 'contrat d'association'. By the end of 1983 the number of teachers alone had risen to 613,202 in the state sector and 123,158 in the private sector. Note d'Information, 13 December 1983, Ministère de l'Education, Paris.
Interview with M. Buzet, Financial Controller at the Ministère de l'Éducation, Paris. M.D. Robin, Directeur de Programme de Recherche, l'Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique refers to it as "the largest enterprise in Europe" which may not be strictly correct but the belief is significant in itself.

See, for example, Le Courrier no. 84, November 1979, which sets out the budget for 1980.

V. Isambert-Janati, op. cit.


Wallace, Miller and Ginsberg (1983, p. 114) emphasise the same point as a traditional feature of the English education system and suggest that contemporary trends towards corporate management leading to a decline in such 'informal networks' may have important consequences in terms of necessitating a different basis of administration and control. Current trends in this respect and their implications are discussed in relation to both England and France in Chapter Seven.

"La première c'est que l'on peut considérer toute situation éducative comme un système ... la deuxième étant exactement le contraire".

"Poo-Bah is alive and well and living in France in the form of the Prefect" suggests Turpie, 1980, p. 24.

It is arguable that the whole system of recruitment of teachers in France is geared to making good schools better. This system does not apply to the lower-paid, lower-status 'auxilliaires' on temporary contracts, whose increasing numbers are not only a source of great dissatisfaction to themselves and the profession as a whole, but are also another factor inhibiting professional development and lowering morale as a whole.

About one million pounds for each of the 26 Académies as compared to the two million pounds in toto allocated to the Schools Council in its heyday.


Lycee teacher, Calvados, France.

Interview with P. Laderrière, OECD, Paris.

Interview with M. L. Géminard, 1980, op. cit.


Interview with Dr. John Lowe, 1980, op. cit.


117. Laderrière, op. cit.

118. In 1860 there were only 12 IGEN. Sous-Inspecteurs départementaires were instituted in 1837. The number of regional inspectors has increased from 15 in 1968 to 588 in 1980 whilst numbers in the other two branches (IGEN & IDEN) have remained static. See also Minot (1979).

119. 'Animation' is something quite different from exhortation, although the latter, at the annual pedagogic conference for elementary teachers, was an important part of the inspector's functions. 'Animation' rather sums up the post-1969 values of the 'Renovation Pédagogique', in which, for example, the inspector became the leader of the departmental or district team which stimulated development throughout the school year. J. Kidd, op. cit.

120. "Si cette intervalle de liberté, cette marge d'autonomie tend à se réduire par une pression venue d'en haut, elle se réduit aussi par l'effet de certaines actions irresponsables venues du terrain qui, nous le savons, ne sont pas suscitées par le SNI-pège. Place aux avant-postes, accessible à tous, en contact avec les difficultés réelles et concrètes, l'IDEN est vulnérable. Il n'est que trop facile de le menacer, voire de le sequestrer ou de le prendre en stage. En caricaturant, on peut faire de l'IDEN le symbole de tous les autoritarismes et le bouc-émissaire de toutes les frustrations: et l'on créé alors, sans y prendre garde, ce que l'on pretend combattre ... nous refusons de devenir de purs fonctionnaires d'autorité, ce que serait refuser, plus ou moins, l'animation". IDEN Commission Pédagogique Étude 1977-1978.

121. Gémardin, op. cit.

122. Programmes are now available from the Service d'Édition et de Vente des Publications Nationales with new instructions being published in the Ministry 'Bulletin officiel'.

123. This can only get worse as the provision of free text books (1970 primary, 1977 secondary) largely removed the former element of choice available to teachers in this respect in realising Haby's ideal of all teachers in the same year group, the same subject, in the same school, having the same textbooks (Corbett, 1980).


125. The legal requirement for parents to be consulted about educational policy are facilitated by the existence of these organisations which are frequently allied with a teachers' federation of similar complexion. The four major federations are:

1) Fédération Nationale des Associations de Parents d'Élèves de l'Enseignement Public (FNA)
2) Union Nationale des Association Autonomes des Parents d'Élèves (UNAAPE)
3) Fédération des Parents d'Élèves de l'Enseignement Public (PEEP)
4) Fédération des Conseils de Parents d'Élèves des Écoles Publiques (FCPE)
The political complexion of these associations depends very much on their permanent secretaries by whose names they are frequently known.

126. The 1975 Education Act rules that family allowances will be lost if pupils are consistently badly behaved.

127. Le Courrier no. 76, 1979, 28% against 40% 1977; 25% against 38% 1978; such involvement as there has been has normally been about questions of pupil progress rather than pedagogy - the jealously guarded professional preserve of teachers.

128. Part of this pressure is the product of the rapid and relatively recent urbanisation of French society since the old informal contacts and exchanges of small scale village life must now formally be provided for in democratic institutions, a process exacerbated once again by the ever increasing size of the educational bureaucracy.

129. Le Courrier no. 82, September 1979. Le Monde de l'Éducation, March 1981. Le 'Conseil d'Administration' includes representatives of the Ministry of Education - usually the Inspecteur d'Académie, elected representatives of the teaching and administrative staff, parents, pupils and local authorities; subjects cover moral, financial and material matters. The 'Conseil de Classe' consists of the head, the guidance counsellor, school doctor and welfare officer, the teachers and two elected representatives each of parents and pupils of the class in question. The Council deals with the progress of the class and has a key role to play in the 'orientation' process. More recently still the socialist education Minister, Alain Savary, concerned with the lack of cohesion between home and school, has written to regional officials demanding the institution of parent-teacher meetings where all aspects of schooling, including the curriculum, can be discussed. TES 23.10.81.

130."L'une[des conséquences] a été de donner consciences aux parents qu'ils ont un droit à la parole, à l'information, et même un droit de regard sur ce qui se fait à l'école. Désormais il sera de plus en plus impossible de dire aux parents ça ne vous regarde pas" (Le Courrier, no. 82, September 1979).

131. Interview with M. J. Teynier, op. cit.

132. Interview with Dr. J. Lowe, op. cit.

133. "Les responsables essayent de faire face à ses transformations d'infrastructure par des innovations immédiatement érodées et marginalisées faute d'une prise en compte réelle de leurs objectifs et de leur moyens" (Le Grand, 1977, p. 272).

134. Interview with M. Carniol, deputy secretary, SNI (collège) and M. Ichmouakmetoff, secretary SNI (primaire), Caen.

135. One of the largest teachers unions, the 'Syndicat National des Instituteurs' (SNI) opposed the Haby reforms, the principles of which had long been their policy, on the grounds that they would not fulfil their intentions of abolishing selection (Hanley et al., 1980, TES 4.3.77).
The importance of this issue was reflected in the remarkably peaceful 'rentree' of September 1981 after the new socialist government had created a further 4,600 posts than the 2,400 already planned (5,443 primary, 5,000 secondary) and planned a further 17,000 for 1983 despite a drop of 39,300 in pupil numbers whilst the position of the 40,000 auxilliaries is to be made more secure (Cassassus, 1981).

In a typically French paradox, this plan has run into trouble since staff from the école normale which provides teacher-training, and those from the Université are not allowed to enter each others' institutions.

The scale of the difficulties faced by this umbrella association - originally 28 and now comprising 47 groups - is thrown into relief when it is borne in mind that there are only 6 teacher unions in England.

See, for example, Dreyfus 'Un Syndicalisme Écartelé par la politique', Le Figaro, 25.4.80 - which argues that the internal divisions of FEN militated against the teacher strikes of April 1980 having any effect.

This point is discussed by Dreyfus in an interview with Raymond Barre in Le Figaro, 25.4.80. Thus, for example, the position of the 'socialist' Société Générale des Enseignants Nationals which is part of the Confédération Générale des Travailleurs (the French equivalent of the TUC) as set out in a recent pamphlet 'Propositions pour l'école de Base' starts off from the premise of the school being an agent of social reproduction and sets out its policy in terms of an increasingly differentiated communalist pedagogy to which the idea of 'autogestion' (institutional autonomy) is central.

"Dans l'avenir les besoins de plus en plus important au niveau de la regulation du système vont sans doute faire jouer aux scientifiques un rôle médiateur entre les pédagogues et les responsables de l'éducation" (Robin, 1980).

The recent battle within the Institut National de Recherche Pédagogique is significant in this respect as the ascendant 'scientism' supports applied, government research at the expense of more open-ended, autonomous enquiry. See G. Neave, 'Research staff fight to save controversial national institute', TES 5.9.80. The similarities with the recent review by Lord Rothschild of the SSRC in England are significant.

The similarities with the recent review by Lord Rothschild of the SSRC in England are significant.
149. M.D. Robin, op. cit.

150. Personal communication, 1981.

151. "Si ... on compare les caracteristiques actuelles de fonction statistique su l'éducation a celles qui prevaleient avant 1930, l'element le plus frappant est celui de l'integration et de la centralisation de cette fonction pour tous les ordres d'enseignement".

152. "Les taches de programmation et de mise au point des objectifs de politique educative tandis que les responsabilites de la Direction de la Prevision en matiere de systemes d'informations et de renovation des methodes de gestion etait confie a un service dont la caracter technique se trouvait nettement marque" (Seibel, 1980).

153. "L'application en Mars 1970 d'une structure dite de 'direction par objectifs a l'administration centrale traduit l'idee que l'ensemble des activites de l'éducation nationale doit etre consideres comme un systeme d'actions qui peuvent etre hierarchisees les unes par rapport aux autres en fonction des resultats qu'elles permettent d'escompter pour un cout donne" (Malan, 1974, p. 5). At the local level, the move to adopt similar strategies was spontaneous. As early as 1970, for example, the recteurs of Grenoble and Toulouse asked for help from the new Departement de la Gestion Deconcentree on how to modernise their Academie's administration using the new economic and rational means and especially the new 'techniques informatiques'.